

**RELIGION AND EMPIRE: THE KALMYK SANGHA IN LATE IMPERIAL
RUSSIA**

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Im Mittelpunkt der vorliegenden Dissertation steht die Frage, wie Imperien über ihre diversen Völker herrschen. Es wird im Kontext des Russischen Kaiserreichs gefragt, welche Rolle religiöse Institutionen und Akteure bei der Errichtung einer zivilen Ordnung spielten, mittels derer die kulturell vielfältigen Völker des Imperiums regiert werden konnten. Durch verschiedene staatliche Maßnahmen sollten die sogenannten „fremden Konfessionen“ in das Russische Kaiserreich integriert werden. Welche Auswirkungen hatte aber diese Eingliederung in die administrativen und juristischen Ordnungen Russlands für den Klerus und die Institutionen der Minderheitsreligionen, und welche Formen der Interaktion entwickelten sich zwischen dem Klerus der fremden Konfessionen und der russischen Regierung? Diese Fragen werden anhand des Beispiels des Kalmück-Buddhismus untersucht.

Studien über einige fremde Konfessionen des Russischen Kaiserreichs, ihre Institutionen und ihren Klerus sowie ihre Interaktionen mit der russischen Bürokratie sind in der Forschungsliteratur bereits reichlich vorhanden. Besonders ausführlich untersucht wurden in diesem Zusammenhang Islam, Katholizismus, Protestantismus, Judentum und Uniatismus. Der Umgang mit dem Buddhismus bleibt dagegen besonders in der nicht-russischsprachigen Literatur bisher weitgehend unerforscht.

Mit dem Fokus auf den Kalmück-Buddhismus – eine „tolerierete“ Konfession, die eine bedeutende Stelle in der Religionslandschaft des Russischen Kaiserreichs einnahm – leistet diese Dissertation einen wichtigen Beitrag zum Thema Religion und Imperium. Unter „Kalmück-Buddhismus“ verstehe ich die Religion der Kalmücker, eine von den Oiraten abstammende Gruppe, die im frühen siebzehnten Jahrhundert aus dem westlichen Teil der heutigen Mongolei, auch Dsungarei genannt, ins südliche Grenzgebiet des damaligen Zarenreichs migrierte und das Grasland der kaspischen Steppe und der unteren Wolga besiedelte. Sie waren Anhänger der Gelugpa-Schule des tibetischen Buddhismus und erkannten den Dalai Lama als ihr Religionsoberhaupt an. Die vorliegende Dissertation beschäftigt sich mit den Verhältnissen zwischen der kalmückischen Sangha – d.h. der Gemeinschaft der Geistlichen bzw. dem Klerus – und der Regierung des russischen

Kaiserreichs in der Perspektive der *longue durée*, mit besonderem Fokus auf die Jahre zwischen 1825 (Erlass der ersten Verordnung über die Verwaltung des kalmückischen Volkes) und dem Ende des Kaiserreichs 1917.

Untersucht werden vor allem drei Leitfragen: (1) Wie ging das Kaiserreich mit dem Kalmück-Buddhismus um? (2) Inwiefern und auf welche Weise partizipierte die Sangha an der Religionspolitik der Regierung und beeinflusste deren Maßnahmen? (3) Wie wurden die buddhistischen Institutionen der Kalmücken durch diese Interaktionsprozesse mit Vertretern des überwiegend christlich-orthodoxen russischen Staates geprägt?

Um diese Fragen zu beantworten, benutzte ich einen situativen Ansatz (situational approach, Miller 2008) für die Analyse der Interaktionen zwischen der kalmückischen Sangha und dem Russischen Kaiserreich. Durch den Fokus auf das spezifische System der ethnisch-kulturellen, ethno-konfessionellen und interethnischen Beziehungen wird es möglich, den Kontext dieser Interaktion(en) möglichst umfassend zu rekonstruieren, indem die unterschiedlichen Akteure identifiziert und die Logik ihrer Handlungen herausgearbeitet werden. Dabei werden alle Akteure als gleichermaßen wichtig betrachtet. Für die Zielsetzung dieser Dissertation spielt die Betonung der Diversität der Akteure und Strukturen eine wichtige Rolle. In der vorliegenden Dissertation werden deshalb Institutionen, wie „die imperiale Bürokratie“, für sich genommen als Akteure betrachtet – wenn auch explizit als Akteure, die keinesfalls monolithisch sind. Diese Aspekte des situativen Ansatzes harmonisieren mit bestimmten Grundprinzipien der New Imperial History (Gerasimov et al. 2005, von Hirschhausen 2015, Wilson 2004). Hierzu zählt insbesondere das Bestreben nach einer multidimensionalen Perspektive auf die sozialen, politischen und kulturellen Akteure und die Räume, in denen sie agieren. Die sorgfältige Rekonstruktion der Akteure im situativen Ansatz entspricht darüber hinaus dem Grundsatz der New Imperial History, dass man mit einem strukturellen Ansatz zum Verständnis von Imperien Gefahr läuft, die Grenzen zwischen Akteuren und Regionen zu reifizieren und ihre Interaktionen und gegenseitigen Einflüsse zu übersehen. Daher erfordert eine solche Betrachtung den zusätzlichen Rahmen einer dichten Beschreibung. Bezugnehmend auf diese Ansätze werden in der vorliegenden Dissertation die nachfolgenden Prämissen als Ausgangspunkt benutzt.

Anders als in der gängigen Geschichtsschreibung über die Kalmücken wird angenommen, dass die Sangha der Kalmück-Buddhisten nicht lediglich ein hilfloses Opfer der russischen imperialen Herrschaft war. Diese Annahme wird durch Befunde in anderen kolonialen Kontexten unterstützt: zum Beispiel beschreiben John und Jean Comaroff (1992) die konkurrierenden Ziele der Missionare, der britischen Verwaltung und der Tswana und argumentieren, dass die Auseinandersetzung zwischen verschiedenen staatlichen Akteuren Freiraum für einige kolonisierte Akteure schuf, neue Modelle der Ermächtigung zu entdecken; dieser Freiraum wurde somit eine Quelle der Protest und des Widerstands. Wie Frederick Cooper (2005) festhält, manifestiert sich diese Ermächtigung nicht zwangsläufig als Zusammenschluss einer Gruppe, Gemeinschaft oder Nation gegen eine eindringende Macht, sondern sie äußert sich auch in Versuchen, die imperiale Einheit zu reformieren und zu restrukturieren, häufig durch eine Umdrehung der imperialen Ideologie, um Ansprüche gegenüber dem Herrscher zu erheben. Im Gegensatz zum häufig verwendeten Modell eines einseitig gerichteten Machtdiskurses ist der Ausgangspunkt der Dissertation die These, dass die Herrschaft des russischen Kaiserreichs ein kontinuierlicher Aushandlungsprozess zwischen verschiedenen Akteuren in der Metropole und in der Peripherie war. Somit ist die imperiale Herrschaft weniger durch punktuelle Ereignisse, sondern vielmehr als eine Reihe von fortwährenden Projekten und Prozessen zu verstehen. Die russischen Behörden integrierten den Kalmück-Buddhismus in ihre Verwaltungs- und Rechtsordnungen; die kalmückische Sangha wiederum setzte sich mit der neuen, vom imperialen Zentrum ausgehenden Politik auseinander, interpretierte sie neu und stellte sie in verschiedener Weise in Frage. Das heißt: die russische Regierung nutzte zwar die Religion als Mittel, um über die diversen Bevölkerungsgruppen des Kaiserreichs zu herrschen, gleichzeitig aber müssen auch die stets vorhandenen Gegenstrategien der kalmückischen Sangha, die Regeln zu umgehen, zu untergraben oder zu kritisieren, berücksichtigt werden.

In meiner Analyse der Interaktionen zwischen der kalmückischen Sangha und der russischen imperialen Regierung berücksichtige ich neben sichtbaren Handlungen auch die „verborgenen Transkripte“ (hidden transcripts) und Formen des Alltagswiderstands, die, wie James Scott (1990) argumentiert, immer ein Bestandteil des Verhältnisses zwischen den

Machtinhabern und den Unterdrückten sind. Obwohl scheinbar gefügig, bewahren die Untertanen hinter den Kulissen Praktiken, die dem „öffentlichen Transkript“ (public transcript) widersprechen, es abwehren und abändern, und somit die Macht der herrschenden Gruppe unterminieren (Scott 1990; Colburn 1989). In der Ermittlung des „verborgenen Transkripts“ und der Formen des „Alltagswiderstands“ soll allerdings der Grad des rationierten, intentionalen Handelns nicht überschätzt werden. Anders gesagt: es ist nicht auszuschließen, dass – entgegen der These Scotts – die Nichteinhaltung der russischen imperialen Gesetze durch die kalmückische Sangha nicht etwa Ergebnis eines bewussten, genau abgewogenen verborgenen Widerstands ist, sondern einfach und allein aus Unkenntnis dieser Gesetze geschieht.

Schließlich – und ohne dabei die mittels Gesetzen und Verordnungen sich entfaltende Macht der russischen Regierung außer Acht zu lassen – werden in der vorliegenden Dissertation die Umsetzung, Funktionen und Ausübung besagter Gesetze in den Blick genommen, und zwar dort, wo sie schlussendlich ankamen, nämlich bei den Menschen, denen sie galten. In diesem Sinne fokussiert die vorliegende Dissertation das Aufeinandertreffen der russischen Regierung und der unterworfenen Gemeinschaften, nämlich der kalmückischen Sangha. Die Implementierung von und die Auseinandersetzung mit den besagten Gesetzen und Verordnungen auf der lokalen und regionalen Ebene machte aus den offiziellen Verfügungen einen dynamischen Prozess von Herrschaft, Konfrontation, Widerstand und Anpassung.

Um die Geschichte der russischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Kalmück-Buddhismus neu zu beleuchten, wurde in der Dissertation neben bereits veröffentlichten Quellen auch vielfältiges Material aus verschiedenen Archiven herangezogen. Die Archivrecherche fand über ein Jahr (2012/13) statt und wurde 2017 durch einen weiteren, vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Moskau geförderten 2-monatigen Forschungsaufenthalt ergänzt. Obwohl mir die Genehmigung für das Recherchieren in einigen Archiven erteilt wurde, ist hier anzumerken, dass die russischen Behörden zurzeit die Kontrolle über alle Formen von Information verschärfen, und es zunehmend schwieriger wird, Zugang zu staatlichen Archiven zu erlangen. Von besonderer Bedeutung für die vorliegende Dissertation war

Material aus folgenden Archiven: das Russische Staatliche Historische Archiv (RGIA) in St. Petersburg, das Nationalarchiv der Republik Kalmückiens, das Staatliche Archiv des Astrachaner Gebietes (GAAO), das Staatliche Archiv der Region Stavropol (GASK), das Archiv der Orientalisten der Russischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (AV IVR RAN) und die Handschriftenabteilung der Russischen Nationalbibliothek (OR RNB). Die Gesetzestexte und andere Materialien über die Anordnungen der imperialen Staatsverwaltung zwischen 1825 und 1917 aus den Archiven wurden durch veröffentlichte Quellen ergänzt, die wertvolle Hintergrundinformationen lieferten. Berichte von kalmück-buddhistischen Mönchen vervollständigten das Bild der sozio-politischen Landschaft des neunzehnten und frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts. Die Vielfalt der Quellen – ethnographische Tagebücher, wissenschaftliche Studien, Berichte staatlicher Organe sowie Stellungnahmen orthodoxer Priester – ermöglichte die Analyse nicht-staatlicher Berichte und Perspektiven über den Kalmück-Buddhismus. Die Kombination aus offiziellen und alternativen Primärquellen war unentbehrlich für die Erarbeitung eines klaren und umfassenden Verständnisses der untersuchten Prozesse.

Nach einer Einleitung (Kapitel 1) mit einem Überblick über die Themen, Quellen und Methoden der Dissertation, werden im thematisch gegliederten Hauptteil der Dissertation die drei Leitfragen erörtert.

Kapitel 2 beschreibt den historischen und kulturellen Hintergrund der russisch-kalmückischen Beziehungen sowie die Religion der Kalmücker. Die ersten Begegnungen zwischen den Kalmücker und dem Russischen Kaiserreich werden skizziert und die allmähliche Eingliederung der Kalmücker in das Imperium wird nachgezeichnet. Die kalmückische Annahme des buddhistischen Glaubens erfolgte nur wenige Zeit vor ihrer Besiedlung der kaspischen Steppe an der südwestlichen Grenze des Russischen Reichs. Obwohl sie an allen Seiten von anderen Religionsgruppen und Ethnien umgeben waren, bewahrten sie erfolgreich ihre Religion. Die Gestaltung der kalmückischen monastischen Gemeinschaft wich in mancher Hinsicht von den Glaubensgenossen in Zentralasien ab, jedoch bestimmten Patronage-Verhältnisse weiterhin die Beziehungen zwischen den politischen und religiösen Obrigkeiten der Kalmücker. In diesem „Patron-Priester“-Modell existierte eine

Synergie zwischen den weltlichen und geistlichen Autoritäten, in der die politischen Machtinhaber als Patrone des Buddhismus fungierten und günstige Bedingungen für die Sangha und die Verbreitung ihrer Lehre schafften, gleichzeitig spielten sie eine wichtige Rolle in Entscheidungen über die Sitten und Normen der Sangha. Auf der anderen Seite übernahm die Sangha die Priesterrolle und sorgten für die Verbreitung der buddhistischen Lehre, und sie segneten durch die Verleihung von Ehrentiteln die Legitimität der säkularen Herrscher und somit deren Herrschaft über die Bevölkerung. Schließlich wird die Verordnung über die Verwaltung des kalmückischen Volkes von 1825 analysiert. Diese Verordnung legt den neuen Status der Kalmücken als interne Angelegenheit des Russischen Kaiserreichs fest. Ziel war es, die kalmückischen Gesetze in Einklang mit den imperialen Rechtsvorschriften zu bringen. Zudem wurde die Kommission für kalmückische Angelegenheiten geschaffen; dieses Verwaltungsorgan wurde von einem *noyon* (Mitglied des oberen kalmückischen Adelsstandes) und einem Lama geleitet und entschied über alle die Kalmücken betreffenden Fragen.

Kapitel 3 ist der Integration des Kalmück-Buddhismus in das russische Rechts- und Verwaltungssystem in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts gewidmet. Mit den 1834 und 1847 erlassenen Verordnungen über die Verwaltung des kalmückischen Volkes sollte die institutionelle Hierarchie des Kalmück-Buddhismus durch die Einbettung in staatliche Strukturen zentralisiert und klarer definiert werden. Im staatlichen Streben, den Kalmück-Buddhismus „lesbarer“ (Scott 1998) zu machen, wurden Änderungen in den vorhandenen institutionellen Strukturen eingeführt. Die Eingliederung war ein langer Prozess der Aushandlung, Interpretation und Neuinterpretation zwischen der kalmückischen Sangha und der imperialen Verwaltung. Vorschriften, die auf den ersten Blick unkompliziert erschienen, überforderten in der Praxis die staatliche Bürokratie, die der Aufgabe der Implementierung nicht gewachsen war. Die Sangha nutzte die mangelnden Kenntnisse der Behörden aus, um entsprechend ihrer eigenen Auffassung der neuen Regeln zu agieren.

Kapitel 4 nimmt die Transformation der internen Strukturen des Kalmück-Buddhismus infolge ihrer Eingliederung in die Verwaltungs- und Rechtssysteme des Russischen Kaiserreichs in den Blick. Die buddhistischen politischen Grundsätze bildeten eine Grundlage für die Akzeptanz der neuen politischen Herrscher durch die buddhistische Bevölkerung. Das

„Patron-Priester“-Modell ließ sich auf die Beziehungen zwischen den politischen Machthabern des russischen Kaiserreichs und der kalmückischen Sangha ausdehnen. Das Bild der russischen Autokraten wurde von dem des fremden christlich-orthodoxen Herrschers in einen integralen Bestandteil der buddhistischen Welt verwandelt. Die Sangha sakralisierte die Macht der russischen Kaiser und verlieh der russischen Herrschaft somit Legitimität. Indem sie die russischen Autokraten in die buddhistische Welt aufnahm und die Verbundenheit der Sangha mit dem Kaiser betonte, schaffte die Sangha zudem Möglichkeiten, diese Beziehungen zu ihrem eigenen Vorteil zu nutzen. Gleichzeitig hatten die neuen, durch die Verordnungen von 1834 und 1847 vorgeschriebenen Regeln die juristischen und wirtschaftlichen Sphären des Kalmück-Buddhismus verändert. In ihrem Streben nach besserer Kontrolle über die kalmückische Sangha griffen die imperialen Behörden in bestimmte traditionelle Aspekte der internen Institutionen des Kalmück-Buddhismus ein, gleichzeitig führten sie neue Funktionen, Steuerungsmaßnahmen und Interaktionen ein. Im wirtschaftlichen Bereich umfassten diese Änderungen die Abschaffung des Standes der *Schabiner* – d.h. Mitglieder des einfachen kalmückischen Volkes, die ihr Leben im Dienst der Sangha verbrachten und als Leibeigene eines Mönches galten, die sogar vererbt werden konnten – sowie die Forderung nach finanzieller Rechenschaftspflicht der Klöster und die Einführung neuer ökonomischer Verhältnisse. Im rechtlichen Bereich wurden *gelong*-Notare als neue, die imperiale Verwaltung unterstützende Beamte eingestellt. Neben den Versuchen, in und mit dem System zu arbeiten, gab es ebenso viele Versuche, die Regeln des Systems zu umgehen. Manche Mitglieder des buddhistischen Klerus entwickelten Strategien, mit dem neuen System umzugehen, verhandelten und trafen Abmachungen innerhalb der von den russischen Behörden etablierten Strukturen, um ihre eigenen Interessen durchzusetzen. Andere wiederum wurden Teil der Bürokratie und übten Funktionen aus, von denen sie vor der Integration des Buddhismus in die multi-konfessionelle Ordnung Russlands nichts gewusst hatten.

Kapitel 5 beschäftigt sich mit dem Umgang der russischen imperialen Regierung mit dem Kalmück-Buddhismus im Zeitalter der Modernisierung und der Nationen- und Staatenbildung. Vor dem Hintergrund bedeutender Ereignisse wie der Abschaffung der

Leibeigenschaft und des Aufstandes in Polen 1863/1864 werden die Maßnahmen der neuen Regierung untersucht, die die monastische Ausbildung der Kalmück-Buddhisten beeinträchtigten. Im Kontext der Nationenbildung wurde der Buddhismus als ein potenzieller Kontrahent des „Russentums“ des Imperiums wahrgenommen, die die reformatorische Prämisse der Pläne für die Modernisierung des Staates gefährden könnte. Drei wichtige Reformen der russischen Staatsorgane werden als Beispiele untersucht. Zuerst führte 1862 das Ministerium für Staatseigentum auf Verlangen des Obersten Verwalters des kalmückischen Volkes ein offizielles Mindestalter von 16 Jahren für die in den buddhistischen Klöstern angebotene Bildung ein; Ziel der Regelung war die Verhinderung einer weiteren Zunahme an unerlaubten *surgulin-kobun* – d.h. die als Pränovizen „lernenden Jungen“, die trotz der offiziellen Aufnahmebeschränkung im Kloster wohnten und lernten. 1881 wurde eine weitere Regelung eingeführt: Jungen, die in der Klosterschule anfangen wollten, mussten zuerst eine säkulare Bildung in einer russischen Schule erhalten sowie eine russische Sprachprüfung bestehen. Schließlich beschlossen 1890 die russischen Behörden, dass die Beherrschung der russischen Sprache eine zwingende Vorschrift für alle Mitglieder der kalmückischen Sangha werden sollte. Nach der Darstellung dieser drei Maßnahmen analysiere ich die Reaktionen des kalmück-buddhistischen Klerus, das heißt, seinen Unmut über und Widerstand gegen diese neue Form der Einmischung in ihre Angelegenheiten. Die Auswirkungen der drei Reformen auf die kalmückische Sangha waren komplex. Einerseits führten sie nicht zu einer beträchtlichen Erhöhung der Anzahl von Mönchen, die in russischen Schulen ausgebildet worden waren oder der russischen Sprache mächtig waren. Andererseits ging die Gesamtzahl der offiziell gemeldeten kalmückischen Sangha und *surgulin-kobun* dramatisch zurück. Darüber hinaus deuten die Haltungen der kalmückischen Sangha und ihre Referenz auf die 1847 Verordnung auf einen erheblichen Grad der Integration in die Verwaltungs- und Rechtssysteme des Kaiserreichs.

Im Fokus von Kapitel 6 steht der Kalmück-Buddhismus im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, als die imperiale Regierung eine Reform der religiösen Ordnung erwog und den Grundsatz der Gewissensfreiheit einführte. Unter diesen neuen Bedingungen versuchte die kalmückische Sangha sowie der Laienstand, ihre Beteiligung an der Schaffung der neuen

religiösen Ordnung zu verstärken. Sie legten ihre Ansichten über die neuen Gesetze dar und forderten die Aufhebung der Beschränkungen für den Kalmück-Buddhismus. Einige Lockerungen wurden vom Staat genehmigt, allerdings, wie im Kapitel gezeigt wird, war der Grad der eingeräumten Freiheiten immer noch ziemlich begrenzt. Obwohl die kalmückische Sangha für das Erreichen bestimmter Ziele auf offizielle Amtswege zurückgriff, blieben das Ignorieren und Missachten vieler Regeln und Auflagen weiterhin weit verbreitet. Gleichzeitig gaben russische außenpolitische Interessen in Asien Anlass für die Kalmücken, ihren Einfluss zu verstärken: während sie die russische imperiale Regierung bei der Durchsetzung der geopolitischen Ziele unterstützten, konnten sie Reformen in den buddhistischen Klosterschulen durchsetzen. Reform-orientierte Mitglieder der kalmückischen Sangha und des Laienstandes gründeten buddhistische philosophische Akademien – die *Tsanit Choira* – und setzen sich für eine Erneuerung der buddhistischen Tradition ein.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich anhand der in der Dissertation durchgeführte Analyse festhalten, dass der Prozess der Eingliederung des Kalmück-Buddhismus in die Rechts- und Verwaltungssysteme des Russischen Kaiserreichs die kalmückische Sangha nur partiell in ein Instrument der imperialen Herrschaft verwandelte. Gleichzeitig änderte diese Eingliederung die Institutionen des Kalmück-Buddhismus selbst. Darüber hinaus wird gezeigt, dass die Politik des russischen Staates gegenüber der kalmückischen Sangha im untersuchten Zeitraum viel komplexer war, als bisher in der Literatur angenommen wird – denn das „Imperium“ war kein monolithischer Akteur, sondern bestand aus einer Vielzahl verschiedener Abteilungen auf unterschiedlichen staatlichen Ebenen, deren Kommunikation miteinander oftmals nicht einwandfrei funktionierte.

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Note on the Text

Transliteration, translation and terminology

For the Oirat-Kalmyk, I use the Tibetan and Himalayan Library's Simplified transliteration system. For the transliteration of Russian, I use the most widely accepted U.S.-Library of Congress' System of Transliteration of Russian (without diacritics). The exceptions to this system of transliteration are Russian and Kalmyk proper and geographic names as well as titles which are well-established in the English-language literature (such as Catherine II rather than Ekaterina II, Peter I rather than Petr I, Zaya Pandita rather than Zaia Pandita, Ayuka rather than Auka, Jinjil rather than Zinzil). I also have omitted the soft sign (') from the end positions of the words.

I am aware that the term "confession" is strictly applicable only to Christian denominations, however, nineteenth – early twentieth centuries sources use the term "foreign confessions" [*inostrannye ispovedaniia*] to refer to all non-Orthodox faiths. Therefore, I follow the sources and also use the term "foreign confessions", however, I do put the term in the inverted commas.

To refer to the Kalmyk religion I use the term "Buddhism" rather than "Lamaism". Many of the primary sources use the term "Lamaism", however, the negative connotations of this term that imply a deformed version of Buddhism, I use the term "Lamaism" only in direct quotations from primary and secondary sources, and otherwise refer to the religion practiced by the Kalmyks as "Buddhism".

Regarding the plural forms of Kalmyk words, i.e. *ulus*, *bagshi*, *khurul*, for reasons of legibility I have opted for the straightforward addition of an 's' where the word does not end in 's' and the addition of 'es', where the word does end in "s". For example: *uluses*, *bagshis*, *khuruls*.

Any date references will adhere to the Julian calendar unless otherwise specified.

A note on archival sources

The archival sources used in this research come from several archives in the Russian Federation. Archival sources are represented with a fivefold label in the footnote. The first label indicates the abbreviation for the archive's name, for example: RGIA or NARK. The following four labels are numerical codes. The second numerical code stands for collection or holding (*fond*). The third numerical code stands for the record book (*opis*). The fourth numerical code indicates file (*delo*). And, the fifth numerical code indicates the pages within a file. This citation method was selected specifically to avoid distracting the reader from the text. A more detailed description of all quoted archival collections is discussed in the introductory chapter and are cited in the sources section.

Abbreviations and Citations

GAAO – Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Astrakhanskoi Oblasti (Astrakhan, Russia)

GASK – Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Stavropolskogo Kraia (Stavropol, Russia)

AV IVR RAN – Arkhiv Vostokovedov Instituta Vostochnykh Rukopisei Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk (St.Petersburg, Russia).

LSGB – Lamaiskoe Dukhovnoe Pravlenie (Elista, Russia)

NARK – Natsionalnyi Arkhiv Respubliki Kalmykia (Elista, Russia)

OR RNB – Otdel Rukopisei Rossiiskoi Natsional'noi Biblioteki (St.Petersburg, Russia)

PSZ – Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii

RGIA – Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (St.Petersburg, Russia)

SZRI – Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii

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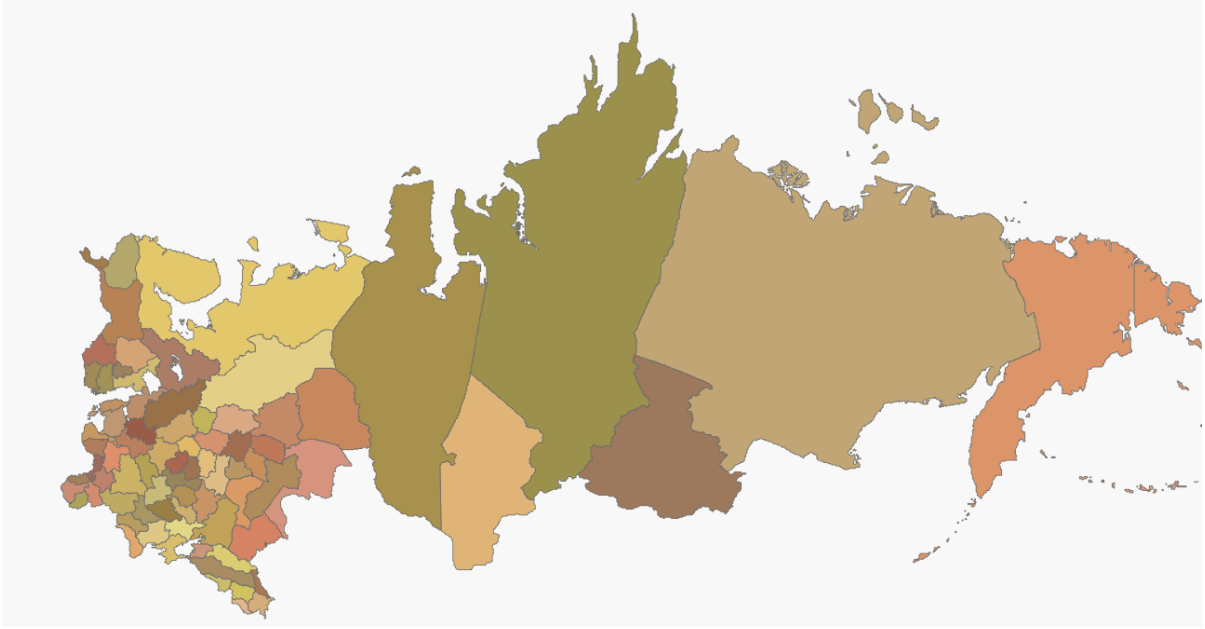
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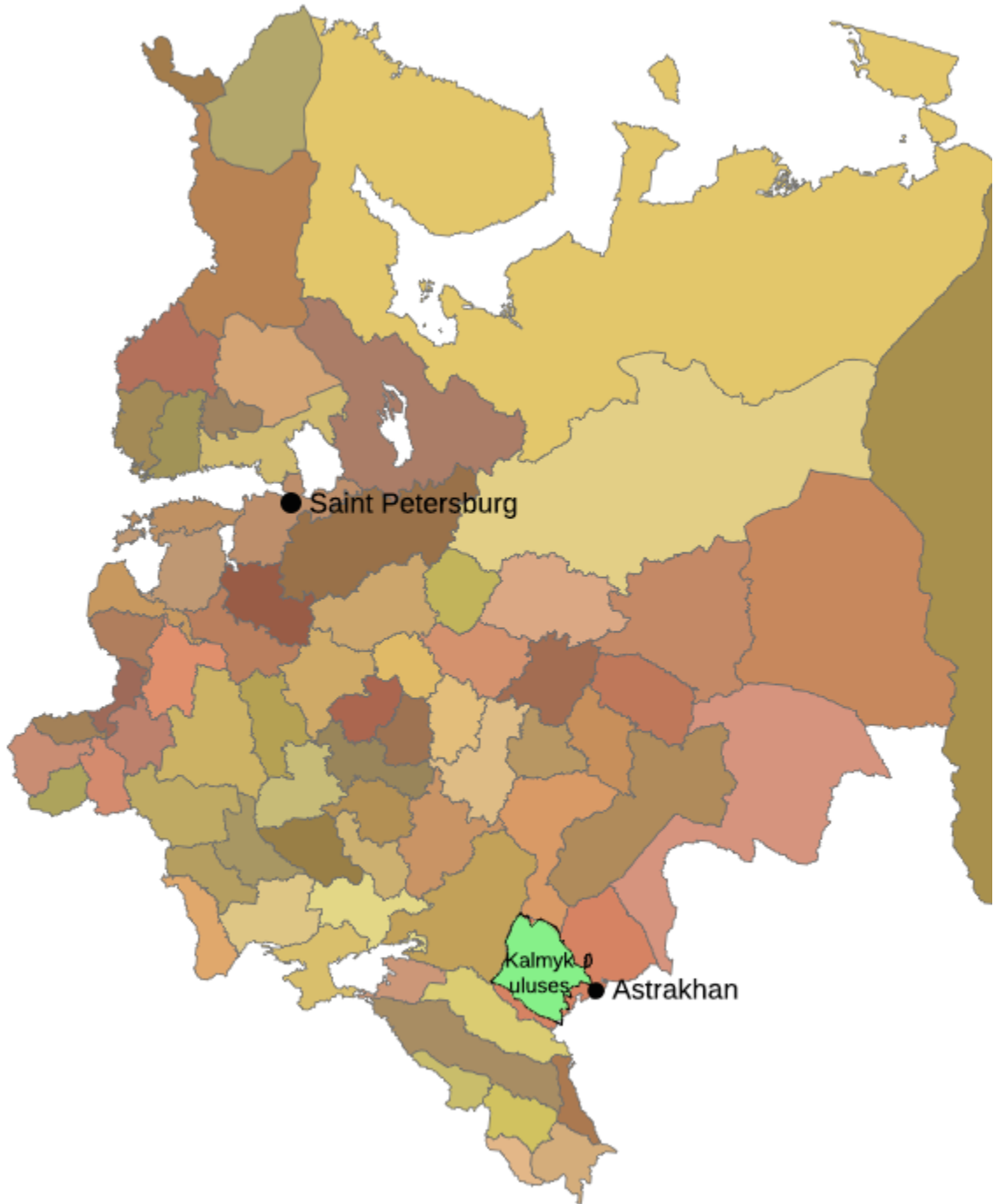
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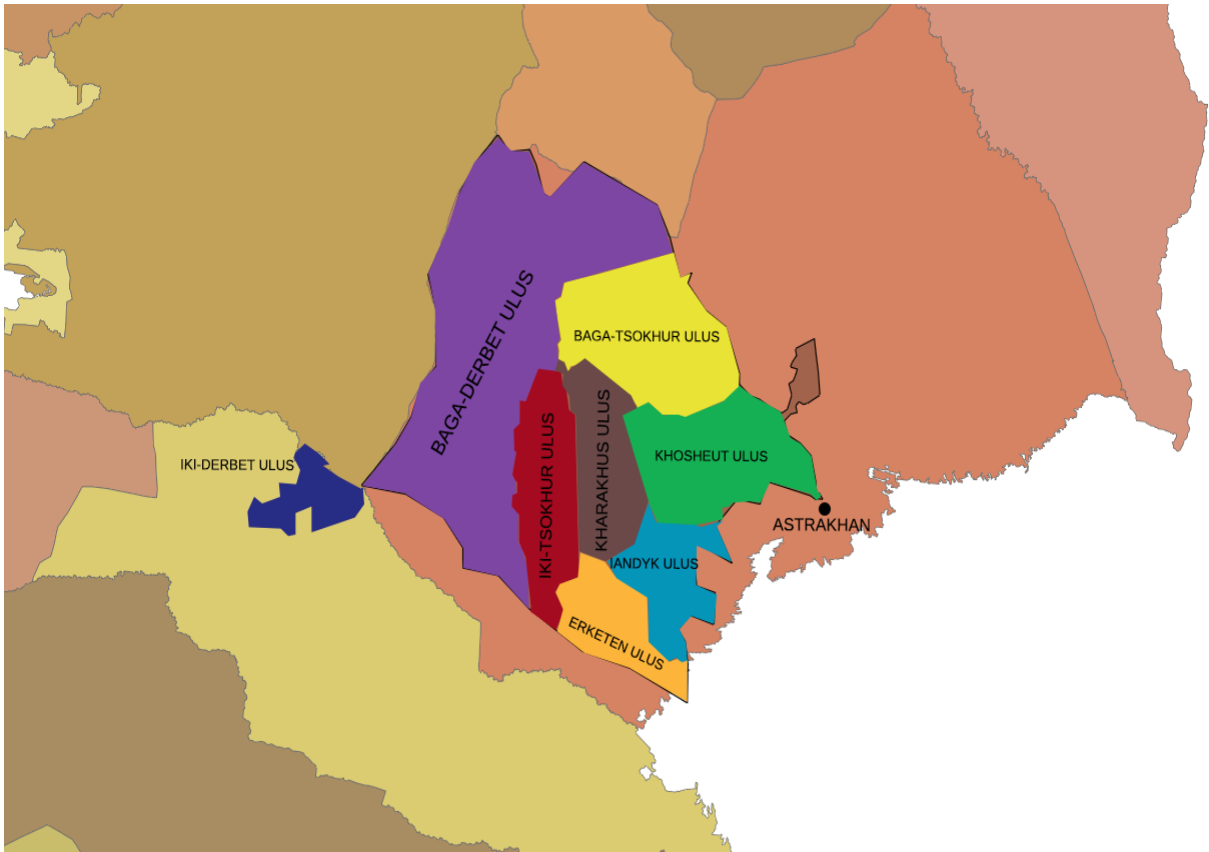
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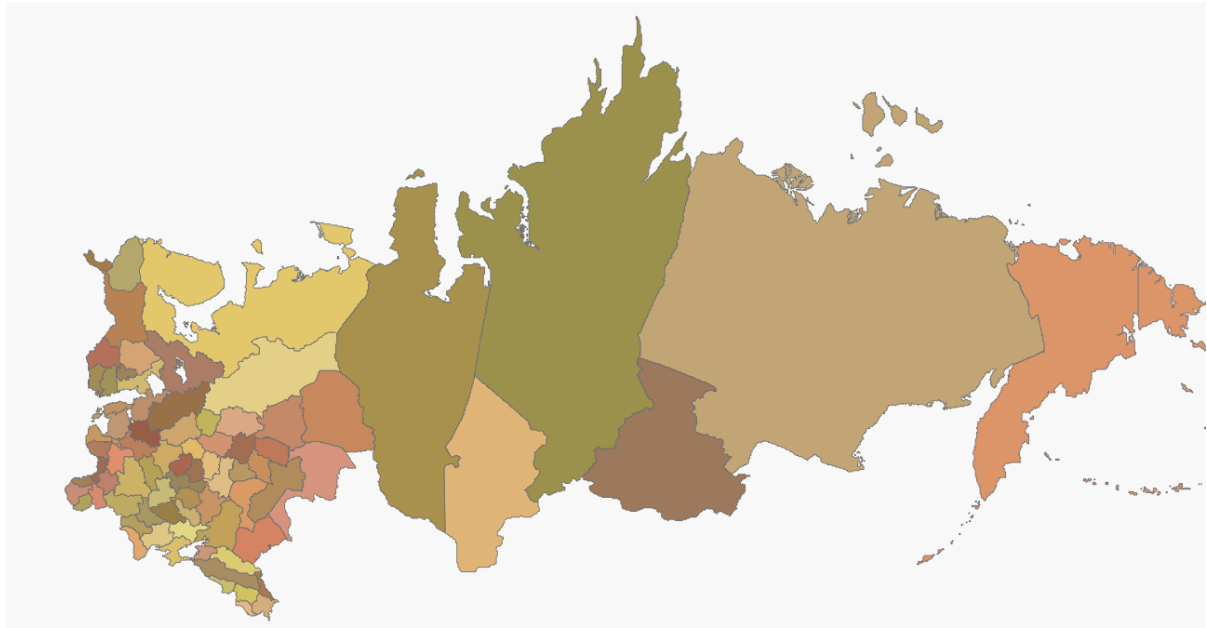
Chapter 1. Introduction

On May 7, 2018 following the most recent inauguration of the president of the Russian Federation, patriarch Kirill of Russia and Vladimir Putin met at the entrance of the Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. Following a tradition revived after the collapse of the Soviet Union, patriarch Kirill conducted a grand prayer to celebrate the inauguration of the new old secular ruler. The primacy of Orthodox Christianity in Russia's religious landscape is hardly new. A Russian federal law from 1997 "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" proclaimed the "special role of Orthodox Christianity's special role in the history of Russia, and in the establishment and development of its [Russia's] spirituality and culture".¹ Indeed, already in the times of Russia's imperial time, Orthodox Christianity was widely used to bless, sacralize and consolidate the Russian autocrats' rule over the empire's domain. However, while the majority of the Russian population identified itself as Orthodox Christian, the historical reality is that the Russian territory in its many guises has also always been inhabited by adherents of other religions.

From the sixteenth until well into the nineteenth centuries, in a series of successful military and colonization campaigns, the Russian Empire gained vast new territories with a multitude of new subjects who differed greatly in their culture, language, and religion. The European regions and part of the Caucasus were populated by a great number of Catholic, Protestant and Gregorian Christians. In 1666-1667 a large community of Old Believers was formed as a result of the division within the Orthodox Christian Church. With the conquest of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556) and the annexation of the remainder of the Caucasus (1817-1864), and the Khanates of Bukhara (1868), Kokand (1868), and Khiva (1873) the Russian empire acquired a large Muslim community. The consequent partitions of Poland

¹ 1997. "Federal'nyi zakon "O svobode sovesti i o religioznykh ob'edineniakh" ot 26.09.1997 N 125-FZ (posledniaia redaktsiia)". Konsul'tant plius. http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_16218/, accessed April 12, 2019.

(1772, 1773, 1795) added large Jewish and Catholic communities to the ever-growing Empire. Moreover, many other new subjects of the Urals, the Far North, the Far East, Siberia, and Volga regions were adherents of different animistic cults, shamanism being one of them. Whereas followers of Buddhism populated Eastern Siberia and the Caspian steppe.



Map 1. Russian Empire with administrative divisions (1856).

Expanded territories raised the unavoidable question of how to manage the Empire's growing and diverse population. Indeed, as argued by James Scott, one of the state's main objectives is making its subjects and environment "legible". In pursuit of this objective, the state simplifies the complex array of communities and territories under the state's dominion for the purpose of taxation, conscription, and public order. In practical terms this process involves the conversion of numerous local practices, such as naming or land ownership customs, into a set of standardized rules (Scott 1998, 2-3). At the same time, the level of legibility that state seeks is not static, but "a condition to manipulation" that can be

influenced and, therefore, changed depending on state's objectives at the specific time (Scott 1998, 183-184).

For multinational empires, polities encompassing enormous territories and a diverse population, "legibility" was a particularly challenging task. The ordering and categorizing society could be achieved in numerous ways. Several imperial polities throughout history used religion as one of the main lines along which to organize and manage its diverse subjects. Indeed, the *millet* system was a core for the Ottoman Empire's rationalization of its diversity. The Ottoman state used the religious institutions of Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish religious communities to organize and manage their collective life. While enjoying religious toleration in the predominantly Islamic state, other "Peoples of the Book" were subdued to comply with state approved religious structures (Barkey 2007, 15-17). In the Qing Empire, where Buddhism played a vital role in the Manchu's project of imperial consolidation, the Lifanyuan (The Court of Colonial Administration or the Court of Frontier Management) – a state agency – was managing affairs relating to Inner Asian and Tibetan Buddhists, and also Xinjiang Muslims. Among many administrative functions, the Lifanyuan supervised the Tibetan monasteries and Buddhist monks, which was an important way of influencing the population of Qing's "outer" territories (Chia 2016, 58-59). In France the state recognition of Protestant and Jewish consistories also provided the regime with "intermediary bodies" that would enable the state to increasingly intervene in local life (Leff 2006, 56-70; Mentzer 1991, 163). In the eighteenth century's Habsburg Empire, emperor Joseph II differentiated between four religious categories that were granted various degrees of religious and civil rights. Although allowing the adherents of certain confessions freedom of worship, the Habsburg imperial authorities also reserved the right to regulate and intervene in the religious matters of their subjects (Barlow 1990, 41-55).

Similar to the Ottomans, Qings, French and Habsburgs, in order to make its diverse and numerous subjects more legible, the Russian imperial government, too, turned religion into one of the main pillars of its rule. From the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-1796) onwards religion became one of the main lines along which to categorize, organize and

govern Russia's diverse peoples. While recognizing and supporting the primacy of Orthodox Christianity, the Russian imperial government adhered to the principle of religious tolerance in its attitude to non-Orthodox faiths, which in Russian were referred to as "foreign confessions" (*inostrannye ispovedaniia*). As such, instead of pursuing greater religious homogeneity, Catherine the Great and the Russian autocrats following her recognized that religious authority was instrumental in projecting imperial rule and advancing the government's quest for control. The imperial government developed a series of legislations molding Russia's non-Orthodox faiths into useful instruments of imperial rule, simultaneously legitimizing the emperor's sovereignty over the different "foreign confessions". Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, Buddhism and other non-Orthodox religions and their clergy were incorporated in the Russian Empire's administrative and legal framework and used to classify and manage the empire's diverse population. Even after Russia entered the nineteenth century and the government began to gradually adjust its governing strategies from "integration through difference" to "integration through sameness", the latter being commonly referred to as Russification in the Russian context, (Schorkowitz 2016, 398-399), religion remained one of the main pillars for legibility of Russia's imperial subjects.

1.1. Questions and Hypothesis

This dissertation aims to contribute to the broader discussion on how multinational empires dealt with their diverse subjects. Specifically, in the context of the Russian Empire, it examines the place of religious institutions and actors in the construction of a civil order within which to govern the empire's culturally diverse peoples. After all, various state measures were enacted with the purpose of integrating so-called "foreign confessions" into the Russian Empire. More specifically, this dissertation aims to contribute to our understanding of the effects this incorporation into Russia's administrative and legal systems had on the clergy and religious institutions of the Russian Empire's minority religions and what modes of engagement developed between the foreign confessions' clergy and the imperial government. I explore these issues by considering the historical experience of Kalmyk Buddhism – one of the tolerated "foreign confessions" that occupied a prominent place in the religious landscape of the Russian Empire. By choosing to focus on Kalmyk

Buddhism and the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy or the *sangha*, I would like to introduce this case into the larger framework of Russian imperial history in a way that the voice of the Kalmyk *sangha*, too, will be heard. The current dissertation examines the relations between the Kalmyk *sangha* and the Russian imperial government in the *longue durée*, specifically addressing the years from 1825, when the first Regulations on the Governance of the Kalmyk People was enacted, until the end of the Russian Empire in 1917. The territorial boundaries of the current research are limited to the largest Kalmyk Buddhist community that populated Astrakhan and Stavropol governorates.

This dissertation poses three main questions: (1) How did the empire govern and manage Kalmyk Buddhism; (2) If, and if so, to what degree and in what ways the *sangha* participated and engaged in creating or influencing the government's policies? And (3) how were Kalmyk Buddhist institutions shaped in the process of interaction with representatives of the predominantly Russian Orthodox state?

It is hypothesized that the process of incorporation of Kalmyk Buddhism into Russia's administrative and legal systems not only partly transformed the Kalmyk *sangha* into an instrument of imperial rule, but also altered Kalmyk Buddhist institutions themselves. Furthermore, this study argues that despite the Kalmyk *sangha's* resistance to some measures, the *sangha* did also partake in shaping the government's policies. The dissertation also suggests that the Russian administration's policies towards the Kalmyk *sangha* were considerably more complex than commonly understood in the existing literature on Kalmyk Buddhism in that historical period, because the "Empire", rather than being a single monolithic actor, in fact consisted of numerous departments and governmental levels that often failed to communicate seamlessly.

1.2. Literature Review

The literature review is categorized into three sections. The first section focuses on studies that explore the Russian imperial government's approach towards dealing with non-Orthodox religions. The second section examines the literature on the Russian imperial

government's methods of dealing with Buddhism. The third and final section, explores the existing literature on Kalmyk Buddhism and the Russian Empire.

The previous research has established that from the eighteenth century onwards, the Russian imperial government largely relied on a religion-centered framework to deal with its diverse population. In his seminal study, Robert Crews (2003, 2006) argued that the authorities governed the empire's non-Orthodox subjects through clergy and religious institutions. According to Crews the Russian Empire was a "confessional state" that enlisted the Islamic clergy to manage the Muslim population. In fact, the government introduced state-recognized hierarchies and institutions for Muslim clergy and assigned the latter various administrative and bureaucratic duties. Crews (2006, 8) called the Russian imperial government's approach towards dealing with its foreign faiths "confessionalization", defining the latter as "the tsarist state's commitment to ruling through religious practices and institutions and the policing of orthodoxy". According to Crews' observations, although the imperial policies aimed to create a distinct religious clergy with a monopoly over religious matters to facilitate the Russian authorities' management of the Muslim population, both the clergy and lay communities utilized the tsarist bureaucratic apparatus to police believers' and clerics' adherence to religious precepts and norms. Interested parties and members within the Islamic community appealed to the Russian courts, officials and institutions to resolve family and religious matters. Thus, in Crews' words, in the eyes of the Muslim population, the Russian state became "a guardian of their divine law" (2006, 358).

Building on Robert Crews notion of "confessionalization", Mikhail Dolbilov (2007) used the term "bureaucratization" of Russia's foreign faiths, which similarly to "confessionalization" meant granting non-Orthodox clerics and institutions recognized status and designating them with fulfilling certain administrative functions. Dolbilov explored the "bureaucratization" of Russia's foreign faiths through the case of Jewish education. He agreed with Crews that religious categories were indispensable for projecting imperial rule on the diverse population, and stressed that the "bureaucratization" of Russia's "foreign confessions" was both an imposition and a privilege. Dolbilov argued that foreign confessions traded in a

degree of administrative and ecclesiastic control for protection and material support. The ceding of control to the state, however, did at times involve the insistence upon changes to a confession's administration, services and rituals. While the notion of "bureaucratization" had a lot in common with what Robert Crews' dubbed "confessionalization", Dolbilov did not place much emphasis on Crews' argument regarding the state's commitment to policing the orthodoxy of non-Orthodox religions (Dolbilov 2007, 114-115).

Mikhail Dolbilov further expanded and refined Crews' and his own arguments in his monograph *Russkii Krai, Chuzhaia Vera* [Russian Land, Foreign Faith] (2010). Dolbilov examined the discourse and identity construction of Russia's governing elites, yet also explores the implementation of these ideas within the administrative institutions and governing practices by looking at Judaism and Roman Catholicism. Thus, particularly focusing on the period before and after the 1863 Polish Insurrection, Dolbilov (2010) explored the Russian imperial government's policies of confessional engineering in combination with Russification policies. In this sense, Dolbilov's work resonates to a certain extent with Chapter 5 of this dissertation, where I also explore the imperial government's policies towards the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* in the second half of the nineteenth century. Some of these policies, indeed, could be identified as Russification.

Dolbilov (2010) argued that the Russian Empire's religion-centered framework of dealing with its diverse peoples was based on the combination of two mutually interdependent principles: "disciplining" and "discrediting". As such, the government intervened in religious affairs and reshaped clerical and pious matters to fit the needs and understanding of the state, thus dictating the conditions of state tolerance of one's religion, fulfilling a "disciplining" function. At the same time, the government "discredited" religions, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, after the rise of nationalism when the clerics and adherents of "foreign confessions" increasingly began to be viewed as backward and as "disloyal" to the Tsar (Dolbilov 2010, 748-750). Dolbilov's (2010, 755-756) conclusion that in the second half of the nineteenth century the government's combined methods of influencing peoples' religious beliefs through the education and

bureaucratization of clerical elites together with regulation of religious rituals was not very effective, correspond to my observations regarding the Kalmyk Buddhism.

Referring to, yet also departing from, Crews and Dolbilov, Paul Werth (2014), in his own words, also aimed to better understand the imperial state's "instrumentalization" of religion. Werth called Russia's system of governing its diversity a "multiconfessional establishment". He went on to define the multiconfessional establishment as a system whereby the "state recognized religious institutions and produced legal statutes for the regulation of non-Orthodox spiritual affairs" (Werth 2014, 4). Werth's study also went beyond Crews' and Dolbilov's as he expanded his focus to include the question of religious freedom and how its understanding affected the Russian Empire's religious order. Furthermore, Paul Werth examined in great detail the role of the Ministry of Interior's Department for the Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions (also referred to as the Department of Foreign Confessions) in upholding the imperial civil order. Unlike Crews and Dolbilov, Werth did not limit himself to any particular religious groups or religions, but took an overarching approach, attempting to include many different foreign faiths. However, while drawing a polyhedral picture of the empire's numerous foreign faiths, Werth only briefly touches upon Kalmyk Buddhism. Nevertheless, by broadening the scope of analysis to include many different foreign faiths, Werth (2014, 10-11) concluded that the state's approach to management of foreign confessions was both typical in some cases and exceptional in others.

Building on Crews' (2006), Dolbilov's (2007, 2010) and Werth's (2014) valuable contributions, this dissertation also explores the imperial government's instrumentalization of Russia's "foreign confessions". I also examine how the imperial government apparatus represented by different institutions and interests dealt with the non-Orthodox religions, their religious institutions and adherents to these beliefs. Yet, I also depart from each of these previous studies. First of all, the current dissertation seeks to fill a gap in the literature on the Russian Empire's non-Orthodox religions and focuses on Kalmyk Buddhism. Secondly, I attempt to provide a strong emic perspective and picture of the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* as an active participant and not simply a bystander in historical events. Finally, I place greater

emphasis on how the Russian imperial government's "instrumentalization" of foreign faiths affected and influenced religious institutions of the non-Orthodox faith in question.

While similarly to Crews, Dolbilov and Werth I examine the Russian imperial government's approach towards managing "foreign confessions", I found some of the concepts proposed by these authors somewhat problematic. Crews' concept of "confessionalization" went beyond the idea of maintaining order among the Empire's non-Orthodox peoples through religion and exaggerated the state's role in "policing the orthodoxy" of its "foreign confessions". While Dolbilov's notion of "bureaucratization" seems a well-chosen term to describe the Russian imperial government's approach towards non-Orthodox religions, however, it does possess clear top-down connotations. These top-down connotations might imply that one deals primarily with the governing elites and bureaucratic apparatus. This makes it difficult to allow for a sense of agency on the part of the representatives of non-Orthodox faiths. Paul Werth's "multiconfessional establishment" seems to me the most suitable term to describe the Russian government's approach to utilizing religion for the purpose of legibility and control. However, while I do, at times, use the term "multiconfessional establishment", it is necessary to clarify that I use this term interchangeably and as a synonym for the administrative and legal systems of governing Russia's non-Orthodox faiths.

In addition to such studies as conducted by Crews, Dolbilov and Werth that explored the Russian empire's religion-centered framework of managing its religious diversity, there is a considerable amount of literature that focused specifically on different non-Orthodox peoples and their religions. Robert Geraci (2001), Fiouzeh Mostashari (2001, 2006), Allen Frank (2001, 2017), Dmitrii Arapov (2004, 2011) and Elena Campbell (2005, 2015) examined how the Russian imperial government managed Islam and Muslim communities. A significant body of literature also explored the other non-Orthodox peoples of Russia, such as Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and the Uniates (Avrutin 2010; Coleman 2005, Klier 1995, 2001; Skinner 2009, Staliunas 2007; Thaden 1981, 1984; Weeks 1996, 2001, 2008, 2013; Wolf 2002-2003). However, while quite extensive research has been conducted with regard to many of the

empire's "foreign confessions", the policies towards Buddhism remain underrepresented in scholarly works, especially outside of Russia.

The Buddhist world of the Russian Empire was represented by the two Mongol peoples: the Buriats on both sides of Lake Baikal in Eastern Siberia, and the Kalmyks in the Caspian steppes. Although culturally very similar; the two Buddhist minorities of Russia had wholly different early encounters with the empire. The Buriats roamed the area between both sides of Lake Baikal, at the borderlands between modern-day Russia, China and Mongolia, and became subjects of the power play between the Russian and Qing empires. The demarcation of the Russian-Qing's border, which was settled in the Treaties of Nerchinsk in 1689 and Kiakhta in 1727 ascribed the Buriats' homelands to Russia, and, subsequently, turned the Buriats into Russian subjects (Schorkowitz 2001b, 202). Unlike the Buriats, the Kalmyks came into contact with the Russian Empire of their own accord. Migrating westward from their ancestral lands in Dzungaria they arrived to roam Russia's southwestern frontier in the early seventeenth century. The Kalmyk road to Russian subjecthood, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.3, took more than one hundred years. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the Kalmyks lost their final remnants of political independence and submitted to Russian rule.

The only author who has investigated the history of both Buddhist peoples of Russia is Dittmar Schorkowitz. Schorkowitz's work presents a remarkable comparative analysis of the history of two of Russia's Buddhist communities², especially considering the scarce literature on the topic in other languages but Russian. Schorkowitz (2001a, 2001b) examined the history of the Russian state and Kalmyk and Buriat Buddhist communities through the policies of Christianization and Russification. In his seminal work *Staat und Nationalitäten in Russland: Der Integrationsprozess der Burjaten und Kalmücken, 1822-1925*, he (2001a, 14) asked three major questions which are closely linked to the goals set out in this dissertation. The first question is with which tools and strategies, and for what reasons the Russian state

² The third Buddhist nationality of the today's Russian Federation, the Tuvans, became a part of the Soviet Union in 1944.

attempted to further the integration of these nationalities. The second question concerns the methods with which the state attempted to implant a sense of citizenship (Rus: *grazhdanstvennost*) in its non-Russian subjects. And, finally, Schorkowitz evaluates the effectiveness of these methods.

In the case of the Kalmyks, Schorkowitz considers the 1825 Regulations for the Governance of the Kalmyk People to be the starting point towards integration into the Russian state. Put briefly, Schorkowitz (2001a, 21) lists the major methods of integration and assimilation into the Russian cultural and territorial sphere as being: the hollowing out of existing governance structures, the replacement of traditional legal traditions, sedentarization, efforts at conversion to Russian Orthodoxy, taxation, co-opting of local elites, and the introduction of Russian as the new administrative language. Unsurprisingly, these methods are also found in our description of the Russian state's approach to managing Kalmyk Buddhism. Although referring to the thrust of the process as Russification or a "russocentric *Kulturmission*", Schorkowitz (2001a, 16-18) points out that often enough practical considerations were as important as ideology in driving integrational policies forward. This is certainly a remark which applies to Russian officialdom – especially local authorities – in their efforts to deal with Kalmyk Buddhism and its clergymen. With regard to the concept of forced Russification Schorkowitz (2001a, 23-24) writes that processes which can be thus characterized distinguish themselves by the choice of means involved, as well as the level of violence and coordination between central and regional authorities. Schorkowitz goes on to conclude that according to the considerable collection of sources he examined, the central government did view Russification as a concrete objective and used violence where necessary. Touching upon the focus of this dissertation, Schorkowitz (2001a, 24) also states that although the cultural Russification of the Kalmyks and the Buriats in terms of proselytization was rather superficial, it did lead to a counter movement of reform among the Buddhist monastic community, which in turn resulted in an increase in reactionary policies on the side of the Russian authorities until the freedom of conscience was introduced in 1905.

There are several other influential works that focused specifically on the relations between the Russian imperial government and Buriat Buddhism, that are particularly relevant to this dissertation. Gerasimova (1957) examines the construction of Russia's imperial system of governance of Buriat Buddhism. Tracing the evolution of the imperial government's policies from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Gerasimova presents a dynamic picture of collision of interests, constant negotiations and renegotiations of Buriat Buddhism's place within the Empire's legal, administrative and ideological frameworks. Similar processes of negotiation and bargaining between Buddhist sangha and the Russian imperial authorities can also be found in the case of Kalmyk Buddhism. Gerasimova (1957, 38-40) argues that although the government's legislation imposed official restrictions on Buriat Buddhism, in reality, these restrictions were merely "formal measures and did not have much influence over the following development of Buddhism, because the Tsarist government did not set itself the goal of combatting Buddhism". According to Gerasimova (1957, 39-40, 67-70) the proximity to and close ties with the Buddhist establishment in the Mongolian heartlands made it challenging for the Russian imperial government to impose severe restrictions and sanction Buriat Buddhist monastics for violating the rules, especially as the government also needed the Buriats to represent Russia's interests abroad. Although similar to much of the literature published in the Soviet period, Gerasimova's study contains certain ideological preconceptions. She particularly stressed that the imperial authorities' policies towards Buriat Buddhism were motivated by the government's desire to ally with the Buriat elites – clan elders and high-ranking Buddhist clerics – although the documentary evidence presented in the book illustrated otherwise. Despite this shortcoming, Gerasimova's work nevertheless presents a valuable in-depth account of the Russian Empire's approach to dealing with Buriat Buddhism and its sangha.

In a more recent work in English, Helen Hundley (2010) analyzed how the Russian imperial government managed Buriat Buddhism by focusing on two major actors: the imperial bureaucracy and the Russian Orthodox Church. In her analysis she illustrated how both actors were concerned with the spread of Buddhism and its influence among the Buriats, and how they attempted to curb its growth – at times frustrating rather than furthering each

other's attempts. These two major actors were connected to the two major reasons for concern. The first reason was of a geo-political nature, namely the spread of a religion with links abroad might interfere with the security and control of the Russian Empire's easternmost lands. The second reason, more closely linked to the Orthodox Church's interests, was that the spread of a rival organized and systematized religion might hinder the spread of Orthodox Christianity among the peoples of Siberia in general and the Buriats specifically. Both reasons were, of course, tightly intertwined with the challenges of managing a multiethnic and multiconfessional empire.

Overall, Hundley thus examined elements in the Russian management of Buriat Buddhism similar to those discussed in this dissertation: institutional, religious, administrative and legal. That being said, as with many works on the topic of Russia's handling of its diverse subjects and religions, the agency of the religious minorities in question is touched upon only superficially – a lacuna this dissertation aims to fill. Hundley's work on the Russian imperial administration's managing of Buriat Buddhism certainly chimes in with what we will aim to achieve in this dissertation, yet places distinctly different accents such as on proselytization, whereas we will focus on the Buddhist clergy's responses to Russian attempts at managing Buddhism and its influence.

The closest parallel to the current study of Kalmyk Buddhism, albeit focused on Buriat Buddhism, was conducted by Nikolay Tsyrempilov. Tsyrempilov (2013, 2021) investigates the interrelations between the Buriat Buddhist sangha and the Russian government apparatus. Similar to Gerasimova, Tsyrempilov outlined the evolutionary process of Russia's system of managing Buriat Buddhism from the eighteenth century until the 1905 Russian Revolution. In Tsyrempilov's own word, he focused on "the construction of Buriat Buddhist Church in Russia", but also paid much attention to the Buriat Buddhist clergy's engagement, participation, and cooperation with the Russian imperial authorities. As do I in the current study, Tsyrempilov refuse to view the Buriat Buddhist clergymen as mere passive subjects of the regulator's will and highlight how the sangha attempted to influence government policies. Furthermore, unlike Gerasimova, Hundley, and other authors before them, Nikolay

Tsyrempilov analyzed the interactions between Buriat Buddhism and the Russian imperial government not only from the perspective of Russian imperial history, but also from the perspective of the larger Buddhist world. As such, he argues that traditionally the sangha always searched for a constructive relationship with political authority. The same argument, so he concludes, applies to the Buriat Buddhist clergy's relations with the Russian imperial government

As previously mentioned, the broader framework of Tsyrempilov's work aligns closely with that of the current dissertation. Indeed, I would argue that I also investigate the construction of the Buddhist Church in Russia, albeit focusing on the Kalmyks situated thousands of kilometers away from the Buriats. While the primary aim of this dissertation is not to compare the interrelations of Buriat and Kalmyk Buddhism with the Russian imperial government, I nonetheless identify certain parallels with Nikolay Tsyrempilov's findings. These parallels encompass the establishment of Buddhist institutions, internal disagreements within the Empire's governing apparatus regarding its policies towards Buddhism, and the sangha's endeavors to cultivate a constructive relation with the imperial authorities.

A divergence from Nikolay Tsyrempilov's research on Buriat Buddhism is that he concludes his analysis in 1905, asserting that the 1905 Russian Revolution failed to induce any structural changes in the imperial policy towards Buddhism (Tsyrempilov 2021: 197). While I concur with Nikolay Tsyrempilov's assessment, the period following the 1905 Revolution nonetheless marks a captivating surge in the interactions between the Kalmyk sangha and the Russian imperial authorities. Therefore, I extend my investigation beyond 1905 until the end of the Empire in 1917, to elucidate and underscore these engagements.

In comparison to Buriat Buddhism, there are even fewer studies on Kalmyk Buddhism in the Russian Empire available in languages other than Russian. Furthermore, the existing research exhibits significant variation depending on the time of publication. Literature from the early Soviet period notably reflects the state's ideological biases and is permeated with the regime's view of religion as "opium of the people". Much of the literature was written by party apparatchiks and contains a clear element of anti-religious propaganda (Dushan 1928;

Kanukov 1928, 1973). The authors denounced the Buddhist worldview, criticized the vices of Buddhist *sangha* and called for a fight against Buddhist superstition. These works perceive Buddhism and the *sangha* as political adversaries that hindered the Socialist government's endeavors to construct a new and improved society. Despite containing politically charged and biased messages, some works can still be valuable resources for the study of Kalmyk Buddhism. Among these are Borisov's (1926, 1931) publications that provide valuable statistical data about Buddhist monasteries and monks as well as one of the last descriptions of Kalmyk Buddhist sites before the near-complete extermination of the Kalmyk *sangha* and the destruction of Buddhist monasteries by the Soviet authorities in the 1930s.

The outbreak of World War II and the subsequent deportation of the Kalmyk people in 1943 created a significant void in Kalmyk historiography. Accused of collaborating with Nazi-German troops, on December 23, 1943, the Kalmyks were forcibly loaded onto cattle wagons and sent to Siberia and the Far East (Ubushaev 1991: 22-23). Those serving in the Red Army were demobilized and sent to the Shirokovsky Forced Labor Camp (Shiroklag) (Maksimov 2007: 326-327; Ochirov and Vorob'eva 2020: 332-333). After nearly fifteen years in exile, on March 17, 1956, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued Decree No 134/33³, which lifted the restrictions on the legal status of the Kalmyks, allowing them to return home. Kalmyk deportation has been extensively explored in the works of Bugai (1991) and Ubushaev (1991, 2007), while Elza-Bair Guchinova (2005) has examined the impact of deportation trauma on Kalmyk national identity.

In 1967, just over a decade after the Kalmyks were allowed to return from exile, the Kalmyk Research Institute for Language, Literature, and History published a collective volume titled *The History of Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic: Pre-October Period* [Istoriia Kalmyk ASSR: Dooktiabr'skii Period]. This volume explored various aspects of Kalmyk pre-Soviet history. Despite Buddhism's prominent role in pre-revolutionary Kalmyk life, the topic was only briefly mentioned. Aligned with the Soviet Communist party's official stance on

³ 1956. "Ukaz prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR ot 17 marta 1956 g. "O sniatii ogranichenii v pravovom polozhenii s kalmykov i chlenov ikh semei, nakhodiashchikhsia na spetsposelenii" (s izmeneniiami i dopolneniiami)". Garant. <https://base.garant.ru/6331041/#friends>, accessed September 2, 2021.

religion, the book depicted Buddhism as having a 'negative influence on the development of Kalmyk cultural and socio-political life' (Ustiugov, Zlatkin, Kushcheva 1967, 77). Additionally, other works published around the same time (Badmaev 1968, Poppe 1966, Tashinov 1967) examined the work of Oirat Buddhist monk and scholar Zaya Pandida, who developed a script for the Oirat language known as the Clear Script (Todoo Bichiq). However, these studies deliberately omitted much information regarding Zaya Pandida's monastic career.

From the 1970s onwards, Kalmyk Buddhism garnered extensive academic interest. In 1977, the edited volume *Lamaism in Kalmykia* [Lamaizm v Kalmykii] (Darbakova, Naberukhin and Zhukovskaia 1977) marked the onset of a new wave of research on Kalmyk Buddhism in Russia. This volume was followed by two more books: *Lamaism in Kalmykia and the Questions of Scientific Atheism* [Lamaizm v Kalmykii i Voprosy Nauchnogo Ateizma] (Erdniev 1980) and *Questions of Lamaist History in Kalmykia* [Voprosy Istorii Lamaizma v Kalmykii] (Zhukovskaia, Mitirov and D'iakieva 1987). Unlike some works from the early Soviet period, these three collective volumes contained valuable scientific investigations that significantly contributed to our understanding of Kalmyk Buddhist history, rituals, and the socio-economic position of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy.

Following the liberalization of religious freedoms at the end of the Soviet Union, which culminated in the adoption of the 1990 law on "Freedom of Worship"⁴, we witnessed another surge in research on Kalmyk Buddhism. This included works that focused on Kalmyk Buddhism during Russia's imperial period. The research over the past decades provided valuable information on the Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries and *sangha*. The lives and activities of individual Buddhist monks during the Russian imperial period was examined by Bormanshinov (1992, 1999), Dorzhieva (2008), Ochirov (2008). Avliaev (1977), Bakaeva (1994, 2004), Borisenko (1994), Dordzhieva (1980), Karagodin (1987), Orekhov (1977) utilized various archival and historical materials to shed light on the origins of certain monasteries, their internal administrative structures and functions, and geographical locations during the

⁴ 1990. "Zakon RSFSR ot 25 oktiabria 1990 g. N 267-I "O svobode veroispovedanii" (s izmeneniiami i dopolneniiami) (utratil silu)". Garant. <https://base.garant.ru/10200191/#friends>, accessed, April 12, 2019.

imperial period. Borisenko (1994) provided a valuable collection of photographs not only of the Buddhist monasteries but also of Orthodox churches that existed in the Kalmyk steppes prior to their destruction by the Soviet government. In a more recent publication, Andrei Terent'ev (2015) provided a collection of photographs from imperial and Soviet Russia that depicted Buddhism in Kalmykia, yet also in Buriatia and Tuva (for the later years covered by his work).

Another line of investigation delves into the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education in the Russian Empire. While some scholars (Korsunkiev 1977) took a holistic approach, examining Buddhist monastic education in general, others focused specifically on the Buddhist philosophical academies known as *Tsanit Choira*. Existing literature on *Tsanit Choira* addresses their establishment, closure, curricula, teaching methods, and organizational structures (Andreev 1992, Efremova 1980, Korsunkiev 1987, Ochirova 2009). The current dissertation also touches upon the topic of Buddhist monastic education; however, it explores it in relation with the overall imperial policies on Kalmyk Buddhism, and more specifically looks at the effects these policies had on the monastic education.

A separate block of literature explores the contacts between Kalmyk Buddhist and Tibet at the end of nineteenth – early twentieth centuries (Andreev 1997, 1998, 2006; Bormanshinov 1992, 1999; Maksimov 2004; Ochirova 2010). Many of these studies did not focus specifically on Kalmyk Buddhism but examined the Russo-Tibetan relations at large. However, they all share one common point of view, that is, that at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Russia's Buddhist subjects played an important role in imperial and later Soviet foreign policy in relation to Tibet.

There is a significant body of literature that examined the history of Kalmyk Buddhism during the Soviet period (Badmaeva 2009; Bakaeva 2013; Baskhaev 2007, Dordzhieva G. 2001, 2009a, 2014; Dordzhieva D. 2007; Maksimov 2004, 2008b; Sinitsyn 2013). Recent works on this period of Kalmyk Buddhist history establish two distinct stages of Soviet state relations with Kalmyk Buddhism. During the first stage, in the early 1920s, the foreign policy interests in Asia and the government's search for greater support among the country's minorities made

the Soviet government somewhat tolerant towards Buddhism. However, during the second stage, in the 1930s, the Soviet government began a fully-fledged anti-Buddhist campaign: all Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries were destroyed and Kalmyk Buddhism ceased to exist in its institutionalized form. Another focus of research on the Soviet period of Kalmyk Buddhist history is the Kalmyk Buddhist renovationist movement (Rus.: *obnovlenchestvo*). The Kalmyk Buddhist renovationist movement, or in short renovationists, endeavored to find a place in the new socio-political reality after the Soviets came into power. The renovationists attempted to align themselves with the Soviet regime by reforming the Buddhist ecclesiastical structure and hierarchy, and by stressing the compatibility of Buddhist teachings with Socialist ideology.

Another body of literature that is tangentially related to the topic of this dissertation is the history of Orthodox missions among the Kalmyks. While the actual focus of the current dissertation is on the Russian imperial government and the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*, it is almost impossible to discuss this topic without any references to the Russian Orthodox Church and Orthodox missions, hence I will include some works on Orthodox missions among the Kalmyks in this literature review. Indeed, some studies focus on specific cases and themes of Kalmyk conversions to Orthodox Christianity. Tepkeev V.T. (2017) examined the sporadic conversions of the seventeenth century and Dordzhieva E.V. (2008) focused on the conversions of Kalmyk nobility in the eighteenth century. A more systematic account of the Russian Orthodox Church's activities among the Kalmyks was offered by Keemia Orlova (2006, 2007). Starting her analysis with the premise that the Russian imperial authorities used Orthodoxy as an instrument of integration, Orlova identified two stages of Orthodox missionary activities: from the beginning of the seventeenth century until 1771 and from 1771 until the early twentieth century. During the first stage, the missionary activities were uncoordinated and sporadic: conversions happened voluntarily mostly by convincing the Kalmyks using material or other benefits. The Russian government's reliance on Kalmyk military assistance shielded them from the aggressive Orthodox missions that took place among many other nationalities. During the second stage, Christianization became increasingly purposeful and systematic (Orlova 2007, 165-166). Especially after the 1847

Provision finalized the Kalmyks' incorporation in Russia's administrative structure, the government's policies aimed at providing "Russian cultural domination" among the Kalmyks. The new approach to Christianization instrumentalized the schooling system. Indeed, a network of missionary schools for boys sprung up to prepare missionaries and priests from the local Kalmyk population (Orlova 2007, 327). Orlova rightfully underlined that the missionaries' interests frequently diverged from the government's goals (2007, 217, 329-330). She concludes that, overall, the Orthodox mission among the Kalmyks was not particularly successful because of the opposition of the Kalmyk *sangha*, who had a lot of influence over the Kalmyks, and the inability of most of the missionaries to communicate with the Kalmyks – as most of the missionaries did not speak Kalmyk and the Kalmyks did not understand Russian.

Much closer to the topic of the current dissertation is a monograph of Andrei Kurapov (2007). He explored the role of Kalmyk *sangha* in the political life of the Kalmyk Khanate. He identified the patterns of the *sangha's* activities and argued that the *sangha's* level of involvement in Kalmyk political life fluctuated depending on the strength of the secular authorities in charge at any given time. The *sangha* became more involved in political life when secular authorities were weak, and less involved when secular authorities were strong (Kurapov 2007, 212). Kurapov argued that the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy gravitated towards a strong political center, and concluded that the *sangha's* actions aimed at "providing legitimacy to the Torgut dynasty", at facilitating consolidation of secular elites under one unified political center, and keeping peace among the secular leaders (Kurapov 2007, 106, 211).

While the focus of Kurapov's study lies beyond the scope of the current dissertation, some of his insights are nonetheless useful for understanding the Kalmyk *sangha's* views and relations with political authorities prior to their incorporation into the Russian Empire. Some arguments, particularly those concerning the *sangha's* search for a constructive relationship with political authorities, correspond with my own observations regarding the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and the Russian imperial authorities in the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. However, Kurapov's work also has certain drawbacks. Firstly, Kurapov's choice of terminology indicates that he did not give sufficient consideration to Kalmyk socio-political structures. Indeed, the different Kalmyk tribes were unified under the authority of, first, the chief *taishi* (prince), and later, the khan. However, a khan was not a monarch in the modern sense and he did not possess any overarching authority. Instead, a khan was a designated military leader, whose power depended on the support of other politically independent *taishis*. Thus, by claiming that the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy supported "monarchical rule" of the "Torgut dynasty" (Kurapov 2007, 106, 211), Kurapov confuses the reader, by ascribing the *taishi*'s and khans a degree of power they did not possess. Another major drawback of Kurapov's work is that he examined the Kalmyk *sangha*'s interactions with political authorities without giving sufficient consideration to the general socio-political situation in the Kalmyk steppes, which results in overemphasizing the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's influence over certain events. Thus, Kurapov (2007, 214) argued that the 1771 Kalmyk exodus was largely caused by the *sangha*'s political influence, who preferred to leave in order to establish one large, common Mongol state with a Buddhist ideology. However, one must take into account that there were many factors that caused the Kalmyk exodus, including increased Russian interference in Kalmyk affairs, the decline of Kalmyk independence, the decrease in pastures, and an increase in converts and run-aways.

Thus, from the list of literature mentioned above, one could say that existing studies cover a variety of topics regarding the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's role in the political life of the Kalmyk Khanate, monastic education, certain monastic figures, foreign contacts, and the relations between the Soviet government and Kalmyk Buddhism. However, the research on the relations between Kalmyk Buddhism and the Russian imperial government in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remains scarce at best. Burchinova (1977) and Kurapov (2016) examined Kalmyk Buddhism's place in the Russian Empire's legal and administrative systems. Both authors provide substantial accounts of the provisions regarding Buddhism contained within the 1834 and 1847 Provisions for the Governance of the Kalmyk People. Burchinova (1977, 32) concluded that while the legislation provided Buddhism with legal recognition as an official religion of the Kalmyk people, at the same time,

the Kalmyk *sangha* was deprived of any form of self-government, and was “completely subordinated to the administrative bodies of the Astrakhan Governorate”. In a similar key, Kurapov argued that the peculiarity of imperial Russia’s confessional policies towards Kalmyk Buddhism in Astrakhan and other regions was one of “strict control over monasteries, regulation of the clergy’s conduct and the reduction of clergy” (Kurapov 2016, 179). While I do agree that the Russian government’s policies aimed at restricting the number of Buddhist monks and regulating their conduct, I, nevertheless found both Burchinova’s and Kurapov’s remaining conclusions rather problematic. First of all, both Burchinova and Kurapov describe the government’s policies to be unified and static. None of the authors consider the possibility of deviation between the laws and their implementation over time. After all, Russian imperial governance was a complex multi-layered mechanism, and implementation and the functioning of laws strongly depended on various external and internal issues, as well as the agency of the actors involved. Secondly, as I found during my investigation, the Russian imperial government frequently lacked the necessary personnel and instruments to exercise “strict control” over the Buddhist *sangha* and monasteries that nomadized over the vast steppe territory.

In her two seminal studies *Buddhism and Christianity in Kalmykia* [Buddhizm i Khristianstvo v Kalmykii] (1995) and *Buddhism in the Russian State’s Religious Policies* [Buddhizm v Veroyisповедnoi Politike Rossiiskogo Gosudarstva] (2012)⁵, Galina Dordzhieva analyzed the Russian government’s religious policy among the Kalmyks. Investigating the period between the middle of the seventeenth until the early twentieth century, Dordzhieva (1995, 115-116) distinguishes three main stages of Russia’s religious policy. She argues that during the first stage, from the middle of the seventeenth century when the Kalmyks arrived to the Caspian steppe until 1771 when the majority of the Kalmyks left for Dzungaria, the Russian government did not interfere in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs and Buddhism blossomed. However, the government pursued and encouraged conversions to Orthodoxy among the

⁵ I address these two books together because the 2012 edition is a republished version of her earlier publication from 1995. Dordzhieva made only a few very minor adjustments, but the main difference between the two volumes is that she included parts concerning Russian Orthodoxy in her first book.

Kalmyks who for various reasons left beyond the territories of the Kalmyk Khanate. During the second stage, between 1771 and the middle of the nineteenth century, the Russian imperial government gradually began to interfere in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. While introducing new norms, rules and restrictions, the government was cautious in its approach, as the Kalmyk territories remained the outer frontiers of the empire. At the same time, the government began to “widely pursue conversion” of the Kalmyks who populated the territories beyond the Astrakhan Governorate’s Kalmyk steppe. According to Galina Dordzhieva, the third stage of the Russian imperial government’s religious policy, began in the middle of the nineteenth and ended in the early twentieth century. While not providing any introduction to this stage of Russian religious policy towards Kalmyk Buddhism, Dordzhieva, however, argues that this stage could be characterized “as the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy’s resistance to the 1834 and 1847 Provisions”. She also argued that the third stage saw an upsurge in Orthodox missionary activities among Astrakhan’s Kalmyks (Dordzhieva 1995, 115-116).

Disregarding Galina Dordzhieva’s failure to fully define and describe the third stage of Russian religious policy, she nevertheless presents a comprehensive picture of Russia’s religious policy towards the Kalmyks. However, her work also has several shortcomings. Firstly, like Burchinova (1977) and Kurapov (2016), Dordzhieva (1995, 2012) assumes that the Russian imperial government followed one grand, unified plan when dealing with Kalmyk Buddhism. Secondly, while she states in her conclusion that the Russian Empire’s religious policy towards the Kalmyks was influenced by both internal and external conditions, she does not provide sufficient information about which specific events affected these policies. Finally, although she examines both the imperial government’s policy towards Kalmyk Buddhism and Orthodox missionary activities among the Kalmyks, Dordzhieva does not attempt to view these two phenomena as interconnected. She presents two separate accounts without spelling out, for instance, how the limitations imposed on Buddhist clergy were connected to and followed by an increase in the activities of the Orthodox mission. And lastly, *Buddhism and Christianity in Kalmykia* (Dordzhieva 1995) still contains undertones of Soviet ideology. For example, at times, she interprets the relations between the Kalmyk commoners and the

Kalmyk nobility and Buddhist clergy, in terms of a “class struggle” without explicitly acknowledging the theoretical assumptions and choices this entails. Regardless of these shortcomings, Galina Dordzhieva’s works present a valuable contribution to the research on Kalmyk Buddhism in the Russian Empire.

Previous research on Kalmyk Buddhism shed some light on a variety of issues: from more narrow topics, focusing on, for instance, the life of individual Buddhist monks to more general overviews of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy’s relations with the Soviet and imperial governments. While one should note a valuable contribution all of these studies made to the knowledge of Kalmyk Buddhism, they all have their particular shortcomings. First of all, most of the authors that focus on Kalmyk Buddhism made no attempt to consider Kalmyk Buddhism within the framework of the general history of the Russian Empire. Indeed, prominent researchers of the Russian Empire such as Andreas Kappeler ([1992]2001, 9-12) and Alexei Miller (2008, 12-18) recognized the Soviet tradition of division of labor between central and peripheral historians. This tradition assumed that scholars in Moscow and Petersburg were preoccupied with the history of the Russian Empire at large focusing on the state, and peripheral historians writing regional histories without framing them in macro-level works on imperial history. Most of the modern scholarly literature on Kalmyk Buddhism published in Russia continues to adhere to this Soviet-style division of academic labor even nowadays, hence Kalmyk Buddhism is examined mostly in the framework of Kalmyk national history. Furthermore, as a result of this division of labor between central and peripheral historians, the existing Russian literature on Kalmyk Buddhism rarely poses any critical questions with regard to what motivated the central authorities, and focuses almost exclusively on the effect the empire’s policies had on the lives of the Kalmyks. Thus, the topic of Kalmyk Buddhism is generally looked at in detachment from the general history of the Russian Empire.

A second shortcoming is that the existing research tends to black-box such important actors as the “empire”, the “government”, the “Orthodox Church”, and even the “Kalmyk *sangha*”. All of these actors are viewed as singular unified actors, which makes it difficult to

recognize and comprehend the full complexity of the state of historical developments. The empire's policies towards its minorities varied greatly and were often contradictory and tortuous, therefore, it is important, in the interest of truly understanding the issue at hand, that we problematize the "empire" and open up the "black box". The Russian Empire's government consisted of many departments, bureaucratic units, ministers, and clergymen and they did not all work towards one single purpose in one way and with one interest.

And last, but not least, most of the existing studies of Kalmyk Buddhism understate and under-research the agency on the minority side, in this case the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*. Additionally, the questions of the Kalmyk *sangha* and its interactions with the Russian Empire were studied only in terms of filling in the gaps in Kalmyk history at large. Furthermore, few attempts were made to examine the Kalmyk *sangha* as an active participant of historical processes, fully representing the agency of the Kalmyk *sangha*. Thus, as we will see, one of this dissertation's goals is not just let the natives speak but grant them a sense of agency.

The current dissertation aims to fill the gaps in the existing literature on Kalmyk Buddhism and present a comprehensive account of the latter's historical experience as a part of the Russian Empire's "confessional state", while bringing the agency of the Kalmyk *sangha* to the fore.

1.3. Approach

The current dissertation is influenced by discourse around the imperial turn, which gained momentum at the end of the twentieth century as a response to decolonization and post-colonial critique. This turn has significantly impacted social and historical anthropology, prompting scholars to critically examine the enduring effects of imperialism and colonialism. Specifically, from among the various approaches under the imperial turn this dissertation situates itself within the "new imperial history" literature, which integrates cultural, social, and postcolonial perspectives into traditional historical narratives. Historians like Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper emphasize the importance of understanding imperialism as a

cultural and social process, revealing how colonial encounters shaped identities, knowledge systems, and social hierarchies (1997, 3-11). The "new imperial history" moves beyond the conventional focus on political, economic, and military aspects of empire-building to explore the complex interactions between imperial powers and colonized societies, challenging the traditional opposition between the metropole and periphery and emphasizing historical difference and plurality.

Kathleen Wilson (2004, 1-4) argues in her introduction to a "new imperial history" of the British empire that traditional historical narratives often universalized Eurocentric experiences and excluded non-elite and non-Western perspectives. In contrast, the "new imperial history" examines empire-building as a hybrid process involving both rulers and the ruled, with exchanges between peripheries and centers occurring in both directions (von Hirschhausen 2015, 718-719). Scholars of "new imperial history" seek to acknowledge and give voice to the "subaltern"—including indigenous peoples, women, and others marginalized in the historical archive (Wilson 2004, 1-4). As noted by Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000, 27-34), incorporating the voices and experiences of the colonized offers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the imperial past and its enduring legacies.

The shift toward "new imperial history" in the studies of the Russian Empire began after the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991. A pivotal work influencing post-Soviet, European and North-American Russian studies was Andreas Kappeler's *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History*⁶ ([1992]2001). Kappeler foregrounds the multi-ethnic composition of the Russian Empire, moving away from previously dominant, more centralized and homogenized narratives. By examining local and regional histories within the empire, Kappeler highlights the diversity of experiences and the varying degrees of integration and resistance among different ethnic groups. This approach complicates the notion of a monolithic imperial

⁶ This book was first published in 1992 in German with the title *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall*. I refer to the 2001 English version of the book that I consulted.

authority and underscores the fragmented nature of imperial rule, emphasizing the agency of the empire's subjects in shaping imperial policies and practices. This aligns with the "new imperial history" focus on the interactive and negotiated aspects of imperial domination.

Following Andreas Kappeler's work, the "new imperial history" approach gained momentum as scholars privileged such objects of research as: different kinds of imperial agents, zones of contacts and interactions, diverse social experiences and regimes of differences (Burbank and Cooper 2010; Gerasimov 2009a, 2010; Khodarkovsky 2002; Matsuzato 2007; Mogilner 2008, 2014; Semyonov 2009; Staliunas 2007; Sunderland 2004; Tsyrempilov 2013; Usmanova 2005). And in post-Soviet countries, the international quarterly *Ab Imperio* became a hub for research in "new imperial histories", where the editors and contributors examine a myriad of "multiple 'imperial situations' [...] of multilayered and uneven heterogeneity" (Mogilner 2014, 45-46).

Before we continue, it is important to note here, that the starting point of this dissertation is that the Russian Empire was a colonial empire (Breyfogle, Schrader, Sunderland 2007; Brower 2003, Khodarkovsky 2002; Lieven 2000, 2004; Miller 2008, Schorkowitz 2016, 2019). Though this is not a controversial position, Gerasimov et al (2005, 48) did correctly state that "the discussion of the limits and foundations of the application of the classic colonial empire model to the historical experiences of Russia and the Soviet Union has not ended in definite consensus". The contiguous geographical expansion of Russia complicates the clear demarcation between metropole and colony, thus distinguishing its colonial nature from that of classical maritime empires. The Russian Empire, therefore, should be understood not as a classical maritime empire but as a contiguous or continental empire. Such empires are characterized by their porous boundaries and the fluid distinctions between the imperial center and the periphery. They are marked by the central role of dynastic and nondemocratic rule, the existence of subjecthood and differentiated citizenship statuses, multiethnic populations, and a more explicit contestation of imperial space by national identities (Barkey and von Hagen 1997; Lieven 2000, 2004; Suny and Martin 2001). Rather than a commercial empire with "colonies of exploitation", such as Britain or Spain, the

Russian Empire's expansion gave rise to "colonies of rule" (Schorkowitz 2019, 126). The way the Russian Empire governed its newly acquired territories and subjects is, of course, subject to change over time. Schorkowitz speaks of "a shift from indirect to direct rule" – a process which matures over time as these territories are transformed into internal colonies (2017, 419; 2019, 126). The paradigm shift from "indirect to direct rule", or in other words from "integration through difference" to "integration through sameness" (Schlee 2018, 2-11) was commonly dubbed Russification, which in Dittmar Schorkowitz's words (2016, 398-399) has "been widely described as assimilation of ethnic minorities' legal and cultural spheres to the metropolises' norms and values systems." As we will see in the case of the Kalmyks, too, this process ultimately "resulted in more rigid forms of centralization, integration, and domination" (Schorkowitz 2019, 126). Despite agreeing with this characterization of the Russian Empire, this dissertation is also careful to recognize that as a temporal and geographic entity, the Russian Empire cannot simply be condensed into any of the paradigms that emerged in the past (Gerasimov et al, 2005, 48). This is why, as we will see, the current research employs a number of lenses through which to view different aspects of the Russian Empire's interactions with the Kalmyk *sangha*. After all, as Gerasimov et al (2005, 54) postulate in their seminal article *In Search of a New Imperial History*, "one can see empire only by combining different research frameworks".

Thus, this dissertation employs the "new imperial history" approach to investigate the interactions between the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and the Russian state from the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, focusing on how the clergy navigated and negotiated their position within the imperial framework. Drawing on Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (2002), which examines the intimate dimensions of colonial rule, and Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler's *Tensions of Empire* (1997), which highlights the complexities and contradictions of colonial power, this research deconstructs traditional narratives of passive subjugation, instead foregrounding the active role of the Kalmyk clergy in shaping their own religious, cultural, and political landscapes. Through a detailed analysis of historical documents, this study reveals the strategies employed by the Kalmyk clergy to assert their agency and influence within the Russian Empire, offering a deeper understanding

of the multifaceted nature of imperial dynamics and the resilience of indigenous institutions. This dissertation aims to contribute to the broader discourse on decolonization and the intricate legacies of empire, emphasizing the importance of indigenous perspectives in reconstructing historical narratives.

Furthermore, to refine my analysis, instead of following the regional approach predominant in studies on Kalmyk Buddhism, which considers the Kalmyks as an autonomous unit, this dissertation conceptualizes the interactions between the Kalmyk sangha and the Russian Empire by adhering to the situational approach (Miller 2008). The situational approach focuses on specific systems of ethno-cultural, ethno-confessional, and interethnic relations. Its goal is to “reconstruct the context of the interactions as fully as possible” by identifying different participating actors and, where possible, comprehending the logic behind their actions (Miller 2008, 18). Furthermore, it views all actors in the interactions as equally important and emphasizes the diversity in their nature and internal structure. This approach allows for an acute awareness of the risks associated with “constructing” the actors, avoiding monolithic representations (Miller 2008, 37). For instance, this study regards both the “imperial bureaucracy” and the “Kalmyk sangha” as complex actors in their own right.

These aspects of the situational approach resonate with the fundamental tenets of “new imperial history”, which aims to provide a “multidimensional view of social, political, and cultural actors, and of the spaces in which they function” (Gerasimov et al. 2005, 54), aligning with Miller’s effort to maintain a wide scope. Additionally, Miller’s careful approach to constructing actors corresponds with new imperial history’s assertion that reconstructing empire requires a framework that avoids reifying borders between actors and regions, and overlooks interactions and mutual influences. Gerasimov et al. (2005, 53) advocate for a different framework for thick description, which this dissertation adopts.

To conceptualize the agency of the Kalmyk sangha, I employ the analytical framework offered by a structuration theory (Giddens 1984, Sewell 2005, Turner 1987). Anthony Giddens emphasizes the duality of structure, where social structures are both the medium and the

outcome of the practices they recursively organize. This perspective is essential in examining how the Kalmyk sangha navigated the complexities of Russian imperial rule, highlighting their agency within the constraints imposed by the colonial structure. According to Giddens (1984, 25), agency and structure are not separate entities but are mutually constitutive. Social structures, which include rules and resources, shape and are shaped by human actions (Giddens 1984, 2-9). This duality of structure means that while the Kalmyk sangha operated within the constraints of Russian imperial policies, they also had the capacity to influence and reshape these structures through their actions. Building on Giddens, William Sewell (2005, 141-142) argues that agency is inherently part of social structures, as knowledge of cultural schemas allows individuals to creatively apply them in new contexts. This creative application generates varying resources, making outcomes unpredictable and potentially modifying the schemas themselves. The process highlights the inseparability of agency and structure, with agents using their knowledge and resources to influence and transform social relations. Therefore, agency arises from the ability to reinterpret and mobilize resources within the framework of existing schemas. Ultimately, agents are empowered by their understanding and manipulation of cultural schemas and resources (Sewell 2005, 141-144). In the same vein, the interactions between the Kalmyk sangha and the Russian authorities could be viewed through the lens of Viktor Turner's "social dramas", where moments of conflict and negotiation provide opportunities for the sangha to assert their agency and influence outcomes (Turner 1987b, 33). Overall, Giddens's, Sewell's and Turner's conceptualization of agency helps us to illuminate how imperial decrees were implemented and contested by Kalmyk communities, transforming official policies into lived experiences of domination and resistance.

Similarly to Sewell and Giddens, at the center of James Scott's theory of "everyday resistance" is a rational actor, who is always aware of his or her dominated position and is always capable of evaluating the degree of domination. Appearing to be submissive, "off-stage" the subordinates keep maintaining speeches, gestures, and practices that contradict, deflect and modify the "public transcript", thus undermining the power of the dominating group (Scott 1990, 4-5). Nevertheless, everyday resistance, as discussed by Scott (1990, 4-6),

is not always overtly strategic but can stem from a variety of motivations including ignorance or habituation to local norms. Thus, following Scott, when attempting to identify the “hidden transcript” and the acts of “everyday resistance”, I do not want to overestimate the degree of reasoned intent on the part of the Kalmyk *sangha*. That is, I do not exclude the possibility that, contradictory to Scott’s theory, the Kalmyk *sangha* show incompliance with the Russian imperial laws, not as part of rational, calculated hidden resistance, but simply because of ignorance of these laws. Nevertheless, in this context, the Kalmyk *sangha*’s small acts of defiance or compliance can be seen as potential catalysts for broader structural changes within the imperial system.

Thus, following the new imperial history, situational approaches and the structuration theory, this dissertation begins with several assumptions. Counter to most of Kalmyk historiography, it assumes that the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* was not simply a haplessly enduring Russian imperial rule. This would be consistent with findings in other colonial contexts: for example, in their study of the competing goals of missionaries, the British government, and the Tswana people in colonial South Africa, John and Jean Comaroff (1992) argued that the tussle between the different state actors created a space and place for some of the colonized actors to discover new models of empowerment and become a source of protest and resistance. As noted by Frederick Cooper (2005, 11), this empowerment could be expressed not solely as a group, community or nation reassembled against an intrusive power, but also in terms of attempts to reform and restructure the imperial unity, often by turning imperial ideology into a claim on the imperial rulers. Although the Kalmyk *sangha* did not represent the most marginalized group in Kalmyk society, but had a rather privileged status, in the context of relations with the Russian Empire, the *sangha* was, indeed, among the subaltern groups. The official Church was the Russian Orthodox Church, and despite being among the empire’s “tolerated” religions, unlike shamanism for example, Buddhism was nonetheless referred to as a pagan faith, the *sangha* was deprived from their freedom of movement and their freedom to proselytize.

Secondly, and in contrast to the common framework of a unidirectional discourse of power, this study begins with the premise that Russian imperial rule was an ongoing process of negotiation between the various actors in the metropole and the periphery and vice versa. Russian imperial rule is understood less as a sequence of separate events than continuing projects or processes. Not only did the government incorporate Kalmyk Buddhism into its administrative and legal systems, but the Kalmyk *sangha* in turn engaged with, reinterpreted and challenged the new policies emanating from the imperial center in various ways. Thus, while recognizing that the Russian government utilized religion to govern its diverse population, we must also acknowledge that there were continual counter-strategies to evade, subvert, or criticize on the part of the Kalmyk *sangha*.

Thirdly, without disregarding the power of the Russian government emanating through laws and decrees, this dissertation also pays heed to the implementations, functions and practices of said laws and decrees when they reached their end point, namely, the people they were applied to. In that sense, the current dissertation focuses on encounters between the Russian government and subjugated communities – the Kalmyk *sangha*. The implementation of and engagement with said laws and decrees at the local and regional level transformed official acts into a dynamic process of domination, confrontation, resistance and adaptation.

To empirically examine the agency of the Kalmyk *sangha*, I employ a multi-method approach, combining archival research and textual analysis. I analyze official documents, correspondence, and legal texts to understand the formal interactions between the Kalmyk *sangha* and the Russian imperial authorities. This will provide insight into the structural constraints and opportunities faced by the *sangha*. At the same time, textual analysis of the archival documents and other sources helps to uncover hidden transcripts and everyday forms of resistance. This will help us understand how the *sangha* articulated their agency and negotiated their position within the imperial system.

By combining several analytical and conceptual frameworks, this dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the interactions between the Kalmyk *sangha* and the

Russian imperial government. This approach recognizes the dynamic interplay between structure and agency, highlighting the capacity of the sangha to navigate, resist, and potentially transform the imperial order through their actions. By doing so, we aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of colonial power relations and the role of religious institutions in these dynamics.

1.4. Relevance

Although the Russian Empire ended in 1917, the present-day Russian Federation, too, could be regarded as a classic representation of an “empire” with the autocratic Tsar or emperor, Orthodox Christianity as the dominant religion, a vast territory encompassing a multi-confessional and multiethnic structure.

This dissertation will provide important insights, not only with regard to how empires function and how they go about integrating ethnic and religious minorities, but also how those very minorities responded to these attempts. Indeed, this study will examine the instruments used by the imperial administration to disseminate Russian values, culture and language to an essentially foreign people at the periphery of the empire. A fascinating process, insight into which has much to teach us about empire, culture, and religion. The insights generated by studying the process by which the emperor’s administration set about integrating Kalmyk Buddhism are valuable not only from a perspective of historical inquiry, they may very well shed light on modern integration and assimilation policies in today’s multinational ‘empires’ such as, for example, the People’s Republic of China and of course the Russian Federation. After all, some might argue Alexander I’s (1801-1825) early nineteenth century Department of Spiritual Affairs for Foreign Confessions (*Departament Dukhovnykh Del Inostrannykh Ispovedanii*) is not all that different from communist China’s twentieth century State Ethnic Affairs Commission, or Russia’s Council for Interaction with Religious Associations and Interreligious Council.

Secondly, this study aims at filling the lacuna in the literature with regard to the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* and its reaction to Russia’s religious policies. Although there are

numerous accounts by Orthodox missionaries and state officials of *sangha* resisting Russian authorities, very few of them describe precisely how these Buddhist monks actively engaged with the Russian state. Furthermore, most explanations concerning the rationale behind this resistance have been formulated from an external, colonial, economic perspective. My focus will therefore be to more on the agency and practices on the part of the Kalmyk *sangha*.

Thirdly, as this dissertation starts from the position that the Russian Empire, too, was colonial in nature, the research also aims to contribute to the literature on Buddhism's encounters with colonial empires. When discussing Buddhism's encounters with colonial empires, the immediate connection is made between Southeast Asia and the European maritime empires – such as the British, French, and Dutch. However, this dissertation hopes to connect the case of Kalmyk Buddhism's encounters with the Russian Empire to this field. Additionally, one cannot say the history of Buddhism in the Russian Empire has received sufficient attention in the scholarly literature outside of Russia.

Finally, when discussing the relevance of this dissertation, it is first of all, important to note the age-old adage: history is written by the victors. In this respect, this dissertation will contribute to providing nuance to the image of Russian history as written by imperial and Soviet historians who have tended to stress national homogeneity and the “great Russian culture” without giving proper attention to the many ethnic and religious minorities of the consecutive Russian empires. As such, this study will contribute to the field of other such more divergent works like those by Andreas Kappeler, Dittmar Schorkowitz, Michael Khodorkovsky, Paul Werth, Robert Geraci, and Theodore Weeks. In other words, this dissertation will contribute to the history of Russia from the perspective of one of the cultural and religious “others” which have not had their histories written and their practices recorded as abundantly.

1.5. Archives and Sources

Throughout my research, I have utilized an extensive array of sources to explore the history of Russia's imperial authorities' interactions with the Kalmyk sangha. This investigation involved a year-long archival research field visit in 2012-2013, funded by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, during which a significant collection of materials was gathered. Additionally, a two-month visit in 2017, supported by the German Historical Institute in Moscow, allowed me to compile further evidence to enrich and support my original findings. The timing for collecting and consulting archival materials was critical, as Russian authorities are tightening their control over information, making access to government archives increasingly restricted.

Since one line of investigation for this dissertation focused on the ways the Russian imperial government managed Kalmyk Buddhism it was crucial to examine documents issued by the Russian imperial ministries and departments. The documents from the Russian State Historical Archive (*Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv* or RGIA) in St. Petersburg helped reveal positions of different state departments and ministries towards the Kalmyk Buddhism, as well as providing insight into the position of the *sangha*. One of the primary archival fonds containing documents related to Kalmyk Buddhism was the fond of the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions of the Ministry of Interior (fond 821). This department managed the religious affairs of various non-Orthodox groups, including the Kalmyks. Significant documents regarding the administration of Kalmyk Buddhist affairs were also located in the fonds of the Ministry of State Properties (fond 383), the Fifth Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancery (fond 1589), and the Land Department of the Ministry of Interior (fond 1291), as these governmental bodies were responsible for overseeing Kalmyk affairs more broadly.

The National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia (*Natsionalnyi Arkhiv Respubliki Kalmykiia* or NARK) preserved a wide range of archival materials regarding Kalmyk Buddhism and the imperial administration. Many of the documents essential to this dissertation were

found in the fond of the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board (fond I-42). This fond contains documents regarding the Lama of the Kalmyk People and the implementation of the 1825 Regulations, as well as 1834 and 1847 Provisions. Among other important fonds that have been consulted were the Chief Inspector (fond I-1), the Chief Administration of the Kalmyk People (fond I-9), the Baga-Derbet *Ulus* Government (fond I-15), and the Office of the Chief Curator of the Kalmyk People on the Road Settlements (fond I-7). The archival documents were either exclusively in Oirat, Russian or in both Oirat and Russian languages. The themes covered in these collections include monastic ordinations and promotions, Kalmyk *sangha's* and laity's wishes and concerns, and the mood of interactions between the *sangha* and local administration. It is important to note that the archival documents preserved at the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia were found in a deteriorating state, and that the lack of necessary resources for their restoration means that it is most likely that these documents may soon be lost.

In the nineteenth – early twentieth century the Kalmyks nomadized within the territories of Astrakhan and Stavropol Governorates, and remit for Kalmyk affairs fell to the jurisdiction of these two administrative units. Therefore, I also consulted the documents preserved in the State Archive of Astrakhan Region (*Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Astrakhanskoi Oblasti* or GAAO) and the State Archive of Stavropol Krai (*Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Stavropolskogo Kraia* or GASK). Although the GAAO's and GASK'S archivists informed me that all the archival documents related to the Kalmyk affairs were already transferred to the NARK, a thorough investigation of the GAAO's and GASK's fonds revealed some relevant materials that had remained there. In the GAAO the documents related to the Kalmyk Buddhist affairs were found in the fonds of the Secretariat of the Astrakhan Civil Governor (fond 1). In the GASK the relevant materials were found in the collection of the Office of the Chief Inspector of the Nomadic Peoples of the Stavropol Governorate (fond 249).

Two more important fonds consulted for this dissertation are preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Science (Arkhiv Vostokovedov Instituta Vostochnykh Rukopisei Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk or AV IVR RAN) and the Manuscript

Department of the Russian National Library (*Otdel Rukopisei Rossiiskoi Natsyonal'noi Biblioteki* or OR RNB). Both institutions held important published and unpublished documents regarding Kalmyk Buddhism. These sources included reports of the Russian Orientalist and imperial official Aleksei Pozdneev who travelled through the Kalmyk steppes several times, books authored by Orthodox monks such as Ieromonakh Mefodii L'vovskii, the works of Konstantin F. Golstunskii, who compiled and analyzed Kalmyk traditional laws, and travel notes left by students of St. Petersburg University's Oriental Faculty.

In addition to archival materials, a great number of published sources provided much needed background information on the topic. The accounts left by Kalmyk Buddhist monks (Bovan 1916; Pozdneev 1897; Rudnev and Sazykin 1987, 1988; Ul'ianov [1913] 2014) and Russian officials (Kostenkov 1869, 1892; Strakhov 1810; Ukhtomskii 1891), missionaries (Dubrova 1898; Gurii 1915; L'vovskii 1893, 1894; Smirnov [1879] 1999) and ethnographers (Nebol'sin 1852; Nefed'ev 1834; Zhitetskii 1893) all contributed to and complemented our understanding of the socio-political landscape of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' Russian empire. Furthermore, the multifaceted nature of these sources, which include ethnographic diaries, academic works, government reports, and Orthodox priests' opinions, facilitated an examination of non-state perspectives on and accounts of Kalmyk Buddhism. The combination of official and alternative primary sources was indispensable to form a clearer, more comprehensive picture of events.

In an edited volume on the topic of interethnic relations at the Russian frontiers, Brower and Lazzerini stress the relevance of combining sources from both colonizers and colonized (1997, xvii). This approach is also relevant to this dissertation too, where records left by imperial actors provided multiple perspectives on Kalmyk Buddhism, and those left by Kalmyk actors illustrated their experiences and encounters with the Russian Empire. Using a diverse combination of sources and conducting detailed reading of the records was crucial for reconstructing the chain of events and discerning the diverse views, positions, and experiences of different actors. However, there are limitations to the sources consulted. Much information and knowledge regarding Kalmyk Buddhism was lost due to the historical

events that unfolded in the first half of the twentieth century. Of all the Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries that served as repositories of Kalmyk and Buddhist books and records, all but one (*Khosehut khurul*) were completely destroyed as a result of the Russian Civil War (1917-1922) and the Bolshevik's anti-religious campaign (1917-1932). Whatever records, religious artefacts and knowledge were hidden and preserved throughout the Civil War and the Soviet anti-religious campaign is likely to have been destroyed, in turn, with the 1943 deportation of the Kalmyk people. In fact, Dittmar Schorkowitz (2023: CIX-CX) points out that almost fifty-percent of all of the archival documents regarding the Kalmyks were destroyed which allows us only to know "half of the truth". While possessing only half of the original sources complicates the reconstruction of historical events, it does not mean that one must not try. In conclusion, while it is inherently challenging to accurately reconstruct historical events in their entirety, this dissertation strives to do so to the best of its ability by critically examining and analyzing the fragmented records and accounts that have been preserved and are currently available.

1.6. Dissertation Structure

There are several ways to structure a dissertation that examines how the Russian imperial government dealt with Kalmyk Buddhism, if and how the Kalmyk sangha engaged with the imperial authorities, and how these interactions shaped Kalmyk Buddhist institutions. One approach is to divide the dissertation into sections based on specific phenomena, according to an analytical framework. Another approach is to follow a strictly chronological structure. In my dissertation, I combine both chronological and thematic structures to provide a comprehensive analysis.

Following an introduction (Chapter 1) which outlines the topic, sources, and methodology, the dissertation's body analyses the source material on a number of relevant subjects in order to answer our three research questions.

Chapter Two deals with the historical and cultural background of Russo-Kalmyk relations and the Kalmyk religious background. It explores the initial contacts between the Kalmyks and the Russian Empire, and traces the Kalmyks' gradual incorporation in the empire. Adopting Buddhism not long before their occupation of the Caspian steppes at the southwestern border of the Russian Empire, the Kalmyks managed to preserve their religion despite being surrounded by religiously distinct others. This chapter also explores the Kalmyk monastic organizational structures and the relations between Kalmyk political and religious authorities. Finally, the chapter examines the 1825 Regulations for the Governance of the Kalmyk People that outlined the new status of the Kalmyks as an internal matter of the Russian Empire.

Chapter Three examines Kalmyk Buddhism's incorporation into Russia's administrative and legal structure in the first half of the nineteenth century. As a part of the government's pursuit of what James Scott refers to as "legibility", the 1834 and 1847 Provisions for the Governance of the Kalmyk People aimed to create a more centralized, clearly defined and state-backed hierarchical structure for Kalmyk Buddhism. However, the incorporation was a long process of negotiation, interpretation and reinterpretation that involved the Kalmyk *sangha* and the imperial administration. At first glance, straightforward requirements clashed with the inability of the state bureaucracy to cope with the task of implementing them. At the same time, the *sangha* utilized the gaps in the authorities' knowledge to act upon their own understanding of the new rules.

Chapter Four delves into the transformation of Kalmyk Buddhism's internal institutions as a result of their incorporation in the Russian Empire's administrative and legal systems. The tenets of Buddhist political theory provided the Buddhist population with a frame of reference to accept the new political rulers. Meanwhile, the new rules imposed on the Kalmyk *sangha* by the 1834 and 1847 Provisions transformed the judicial and economic spheres of Kalmyk Buddhism. In their pursuit of improved legibility of and control over the Kalmyk *sangha*, the imperial authorities disrupted certain traditional aspects of Kalmyk Buddhist internal institutions, while at the same time, introducing new functions, measures of control, and interactions.

Chapter Five deals with the Russian imperial government's approach to Kalmyk Buddhism in the age of modernization and nation- and state-building. Against the backdrop of major events such as the Crimean War (1853-1856), abolishment of serfdom (1861) and the Polish Insurrection (1863-1864), the chapter explores the new government's measures that interfered with Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education. Having described these measures, this chapter examines the Kalmyk *sangha's* displeasure with and resistance to this new form of interference in their affairs.

Chapter Six examines Kalmyk Buddhism during the early twentieth century, when the imperial government considered the idea of reforming its religious order and introduced freedom of conscience. In the new environment, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity attempted to expand their participation in the construction of a new religious order. At the same time, this chapter also examines how Russia's foreign policy interests in Asia allowed the Kalmyks to reinforce their clout, and reform Buddhist monastic education.

Finally, Chapter Seven discusses all the findings and conclusions.

Chapter 2. Historical and Cultural Context

Jean and John Comaroff (1992, 183) in their study of evangelical colonialism and the Tswana peoples of the South Africa urged to thoroughly study the historical background as “the making of any historical actor is crucial to his or her reaction in the making of the history; that the latter cannot be fully understood except in relations to the former”. Following their advice, prior to delving into the topic of Kalmyk Buddhist clergy’s interactions with the Russian imperial government, this chapter provides a brief history of the Kalmyks and their Inner Asian origins. The Kalmyks were, after all, not indigenous to the Caspian steppe where we will find them at the outset of our analysis in 1825. Rather they are descendants of those Oirats who, since the early seventeenth century, moved ever further westward starting out in their ancestral pastures between the upper Yenisei River valley, just to the west of Lake Baikal in contemporary Siberia. This journey from east to west will set the stage for the story of how the Kalmyks ended up moving and being moved ever-closer to Russian subjecthood. Thus, we describe the slow process of gradual submission covering the period from Kalmyk *taishi* (prince) Kho-Urluk’s early interactions with the Muscovite towns, until the economic and military decline under khan Donduk-Dashi and his son Ubashi. This process is documented in part through the oaths taken by Kalmyk leaders during this period of time, culminating in the 1825 Regulations “For the Governance of the Kalmyk People” (*Pravila dlia Upravleniia Kalmytskogo Naroda*) – the first official document that attempted to codify the structure of Kalmyk governing bodies and its functions within the Russian legal and administrative systems.

Aside from understanding how the Kalmyks came to be in such close contact with and later under the rule of Russian autocrats and their administration, we also need to have a clear idea of how the Kalmyks came to be Buddhists in the first place. For this we delve into the most important events in Buddhism’s history among the Mongols and we examine the importance of several so-called priest-patron relationships between Mongol leaders and Buddhist monks. In the consequent decennia and centuries, the mutually beneficial relationship between secular power and religious authority takes clear shape as the Dalai

Lama is recognized as the authority to grant the title of khan, and the Kalmyk nobility continues to bestow material gifts as well as their sons unto the *sangha*. Even with an increasing dependence on Russia, the Kalmyk aristocracy continued to adhere to the priest-patron model of alliance between secular and religious authority. I explore the Kalmyk traditional laws that protected the primacy of Buddhism, and furthermore, I outline Kalmyk Buddhist monastic organization prior to its incorporation into imperial Russia's administrative and legal systems. To sum up, the current chapter sets the scene by introducing the Kalmyk people, their social and political structures, and, of course, most importantly their religion.

2.1. From Oirats to Kalmyks: Origins of the Name

The Kalmyks are descendants of the Oirats, a group of western Mongols. The Oirats inhabited the territory between upper Yenisei River valley to the west of Lake Baikal, and after joining Chinggis⁷ khan's empire as an allied tribe, they moved to the territories of contemporary western Mongolia which is also known as Dzungaria. In the fifteenth century the Oirats emerged as a growing political power: they occupied the territories of current northwest Mongolia; and an Oirat chief, *taishi* Esen (1440-55), took upon himself the title of khan. By the early seventeenth century, the Oirat-occupied territories spread from Dzungaria to Russia's Siberian border, along the Yenisei, Ob, and Irtysh rivers; to the Kokenuur region on the Tibetan plateau (Atwood 2004, 420-421).

From the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth century the Oirats increasingly suffered attacks from the Mongols of Altyn khan and Kazakhs (Perdue 2005, 101; Taupier 2014, 23-24). Escaping the constant advances from the Mongols and Kazakhs, as well as internal political rivalries between leaders of different tribes, Kho-Urluk *taishi* of Torgut tribe in the early seventeenth century departed from his ancestral territories and occupied the pastures of the Caspian steppe at the southwestern border of the Russian Empire (Maksimov

⁷ I chose this spelling following Christopher Atwood, who argued that this usage is historically correct and strongly preferred by the Mongolians themselves and increasingly by Western writers on Mongolian history (Atwood 2004: ix).

2008a, 31; Ochirov 2010, 9). Additionally, as noted by Palmov ([1921]1992, 31) it was a normal desire of nomadic tribes to find better and less occupied pastures. The Oirat migration to the Caspian steppe via Southern Siberia consisted of several waves: the Torguts and Derbets were the first tribes to arrive⁸, followed by a group of Khoshouts (Bakunin [1761] 1995, 22-23; Bichurin 1834, 163-164).

Indeed, it was not until reaching the Caspian steppe that these separate Oirat tribes came to be known under the collective name Kalmyks. The word “*kalmyk*” derives from Turkic and means “to stay”, “to remain”. The name Kalmyk was first used by their Turkish neighbors and can be traced back to the mid-fourteenth-century work of the Arab geographer Ibn al-Wardi (Khodarkovsky 1992, 7). To this date, however, it remains contentious what this name implies. One version is that after the Mongols of Persia and the Golden Horde converted to Islam, the Oirats that remained adherents of Buddhism became “*kalmyks*” for them: those who remained with the Buddhist faith (Bartold 1968, 537-538; Kitinov 2004, 70-71; Nominkhanov 1958, 100). Another possible explanation points to the territorial separation of the Kalmyks from other Oirat and Mongol tribes (Erdniev [1970] 1985, 90; Pallas 1773, 456; Rubel 1967, 21). Although the collective name Kalmyk was used by the Russians and the other ethnic groups referring to the Oirat tribes populating Caspian steppe, the Kalmyks themselves more often referred to each other as “*oirat*” or by their tribal belonging, that is Torgut, Khoshut, Dzhungar, or Derbet (Bakunin 1995, 22-23). This points to the fact that upon their arrival to the Caspian steppes, the Oirat tribes did not represent a united ethnos⁹ with a collective identity. As was argued by Khodarkovsky (1992, 8), only in the course of the nineteenth century did the Kalmyks embrace the name Kalmyk to identify themselves. However, they only used this ethnonym in their relations with outsiders, and preferred to use tribe and clan affiliation for internal differentiation. That being said, it is important to

⁸ Although Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ official and ethnographer Bakunin only mentions the Torgout tribe, when he writes about the first wave of Kalmyk migration to the Volga region in the 1630s (Bakunin 1995: 22).

⁹ Here ethnos is used interchangeably with ethnicity, and can be defined as a socially defined category of people who identify with each other based on common ancestral, social, cultural or national experience.

appreciate the fact pointed out by Schorkowitz (1992, 247) that to speak of a so-called “Kalmyk people” or “Kalmyk history” is not without its problems insofar as we artificially distinguish between those Oirats who stayed in Dzungaria from those who migrated to the Caspian steppe.

While acknowledging the challenges in distinguishing the Oirats who migrated to the Caspian steppe from those who inhabited Dzungaria, this dissertation uses the term “Kalmyk” to refer to the Oirat tribes that migrated to the Caspian steppe in the 1630s. This decision aims to minimize confusion, particularly given the dissertation’s focus on the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and the Russian Empire, and does not touch upon the Buddhist clergy among the Oirats in other regions. Additionally, many of the sources referenced in this work use the term Kalmyk (*khalmg* or *khalimag*), further justifying this choice. Consequently, I will use “Kalmyk” throughout the dissertation, including when discussing Kho-Urluk’s Oirats prior to their arrival at the Caspian steppe.

2.2. Socio-Administrative Structure

Prior to moving to the discussion of the history of Kalmyk interactions with the Muscovite state upon their migration from Siberia to the Caspian steppe, I shall provide some details regarding Kalmyk socio-administrative structures.

The Kalmyks were divided into two distinct social categories: white bone (Kalm: *tsagan yasun*), that included the aristocracy and clergy, and black bone (Kalm: *khara yasun*), which included the common people. Prior to 1771, the Kalmyks lived according to an elaborate social stratification system that was organized to serve both military and civil functions (Kradler 1963, 122). The highest authority and unlimited power lay with the office of *taishi* (prince). As noted by Georgi (1799, 6-7) the strength of a *taishi* was estimated by the number of people he ruled over, that, in turn, constituted his *ulus*¹⁰. The title of *taishi* was

¹⁰ While in the early fifteenth century’s Mongol classification, a term *ulus* was used to refer to a tribe, by the nineteenth century, among the Kalmyks, a term *ulus* referred to a unit organized on territorial and administrative basis.

hereditary and passed on through the eldest son; however, while the eldest son received the largest part of his father's domain, the latter could also distribute some of his subjects between his junior sons, who were called *noyons* (Krader 1963, 130). This division of one *ulus* after the death of a *taishi* often caused quarrels and violent conflict between the sons, due to discontent with the distribution of the inheritance.

Each *ulus* was divided into a number of *aimags*, and a typical *aimag* was populated by people of the same patrilineal descent (Nefed'ev 1834, 90; Vladimirtsov 1934, 136-137). The *aimags* were composed of 150-300 yurts; and were ruled by lower nobility – *zaisangs*, who were subordinate to *noyons*. *Zaisangs* consisted of two different groups: distant kin of *noyon* or *taishi*, who inherited their *aimags* and titles, and the commoners who earned their titles through their service (Krader 1963, 130-131). The *aimags*, in turn, were composed of *khotons*, a group of kinsmen who nomadized together in a given territory. A *khoton* would typically be headed by a so-called *akha* (headman) (Nebolsin 1852, 7). According to Pallas (1773, 484), *khotons* consisted of 10-12 yurts. The Kalmyk *albatu* (commoners) were obliged to provide services and pay taxes (*alban*) to their *noyons* and *zaisangs* (Nefed'ev 1834, 263-265).

In 1771, after the majority of Kalmyk tribes fled to Dzungaria and the remaining Kalmyks were incorporated in the Astrakhan Governorate, the Kalmyk socio-administrative structure had undergone some degree of transformation. The distinction between *taishi* and *noyon* was lost, and all the high nobility were referred to as *noyons* (Nebolsin 1852, 9). As recorded in the ethnographic notes of Nikolai Nefed'ev (1834, 92), in the 1830s the Kalmyk social ladder comprised four groups: (1) high noblemen – *noyons*; (2) lesser noblemen – *zaisangs*; (3) clergymen – *khuvarakh* and (4) commoners – *albatu*.

Although the aristocracy and clergymen, or *tsagan yasun*, retained their privileged position on the Kalmyk social ladder, the growth of Russian government's interference caused the aristocracy to lose some of its formerly high unlimited power. As such, as Russia's influence over the Kalmyks grew stronger, the Russian authorities began to slowly take ownership of the *uluses*. In fact, if a *noyon* did not have a male successor, his *ulus* would be taken over by the state and become a state-owned (Rus: *kazennyi*) *ulus*. Thus, *uluses* were

now divided into two types: those that belonged to *noyons* (Rus: *vladel'cheskie*) and those that belonged to the state, state-owned (Rus: *kazennye*) and governed by officials usually appointed from among the members of the Kalmyk aristocracy by the Russian authorities (Nebol'sin 1852, 9-10). In the first half of the nineteenth century the total number of Kalmyks, amounted to approximately 100,000 people, and their territories were divided into nine *uluses*: Iki-Tsokhur, Yandik, Kharakhus, Erdeni-Kichikov, Baga-Tsokhur, Erketen, Iki-Derbet, Baga-Derbet, and Khoshut. Among these nine *uluses*, two – Baga-Tsokhur and Erketen – were state-owned (Nefed'ev 1834, 90-92).¹¹ Additionally, the Kalmyk nomadic patterns became increasingly fixed, as many *uluses* returned to similar pastures each summer and winter (Nebolsin 1852, 23-24).

While the Kalmyk aristocracy retained the right to receive services and taxes from the Kalmyk commoners, they were simultaneously required to provide manpower for guarding and military duties for the Russian state (Nefed'ev 1834, 263). Moreover, their incorporation into the Russian state significantly diminished the power of the Kalmyk aristocracy and altered their internal relations. As such, while *noyons* preserved the right to punish *zaisangs*, *noyon* could no longer deprive a *zaisang* from his title or *aimag* without the permission of the court. For *zaisangs*, the eldest son no longer had the right to inherit his father's *aimag*, but now a *noyon* could decide which of a given *zaisang*'s sons was worthy to inherit his father's domain. The sons who did not inherit their father's *aimag* but only his name was called *zaisang-without-aimag* (Rus: *bezaimachnyi zaisang*), and they were entitled to receive material support from their more fortunate brother who had become the ruling *zaisang* (Nefed'ev 1834, 94-95).

Over approximately two centuries, from the initial contacts with the Muscovite state until the first half of the nineteenth century, when we commenced our analysis of the interactions between the Russian government and the Kalmyk *sangha*, the Kalmyk socio-administrative structure underwent significant transformation. Due to the Russian government's interference, the Kalmyk aristocracy began to lose its unlimited authority.

¹¹ See the map of Kalmyk *uluses*.

Ownership of two out of nine *uluses* was transferred from the Kalmyk aristocracy to the Russian state, and the traditions concerning the inheritance of aristocratic titles and property were fundamentally altered. As Lawrence Krader succinctly summarized, “such a reduction in power and prestige really means that the entire system was moribund in the matter of polity” (1963, 147). The rise and decline of the Kalmyk polity will be examined in detail in the following section.

2.3. On the Road to Russian Subjecthood: Rise and Decline of the Kalmyk Khanate

Having described the origins of the Kalmyk name and their socio-administrative structure we have now arrived at the outset of the long process of Kalmyk integration into what would later be the Russian Empire. We will start that journey as the Kalmyks or, at the time, the Oirat Torguts move farther northwest in their search for new pastures, and encounter a Russian town named Tara in 1606.¹² Official Russian sources interpret this contact as the moment when the Kalmyks expressed their desire to become subjects of the Muscovite Tsar.¹³ However, a detailed reading of these accounts shows that the situation may have been somewhat more complex.

The leader of the Torguts, *taishi* Kho-Urluk, sent an envoy to Tara. Russian records state that Kho-Urluk offered the Russian Tsar to “favor him, order troops not to fight him, and allow him to roam on [our] land along the Kalmyshov and Ishim rivers, and to allow him to come and trade in the town of Tara, and send our envoy to him”.¹⁴ The Muscovite government interpreted Kho-Urluk’s envoy as a request to become the Tsar’s subject, and

¹² “Gramota iz Prikaza Kazanskogo Dvortsa Tarskomu Voevode S. I. Gagarinu o Posylke Sluzhilykh Liudei v Kalmytskie Ulusy dlia Privedeniia k Sherti Kalmytskikh Taishei.” Vostlit.Info. https://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Rus_mong_1/1-20/1.phtml?id=13431, accessed March 1, 2019.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “Gramota Iz Prikaza Kazanskogo Dvortsa Tarskomu Voevode I. V. Masal'skomu o Posylke k Kalmytskomu Taishe Kho-Urliuku Kazaka T. Alekseeva, o Privedenii K Sherti Kalmytskikh Taishei i o Razreshenii Bukharskim Kuptsam Torgovat' v Sibirskikh Gorodakh.” Vostlit.Info. https://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Rus_mong_1/1-20/4.phtml?id=13434, accessed March 1, 2019.: В его пожаловал, воевати его не велел и велел ему кочевати на нашей земли по Камышлову и по Ишиму, и торговати б им приезжать в город на Тару, и нашего посла к нему послати.

applied the same model of dealing with the Kalmyks, as they had with many peoples before them, demanding Kho-Urluk to swear an oath of allegiance (*shert'*), to submit hostages and to pay *yasak* (a form of in-kind tribute).¹⁵ However, most likely, Kho-Urluk viewed these contacts with Russia merely as a way to resolve the border issue and explore the possibilities of commerce and developing further relations (Maksimov 2008a, 6). Indeed, when Russian envoys arrived at Kho-Urluk's camp and demanded an oath of allegiance to the Tsar they were executed.¹⁶ Not having sufficient military forces in the region to force the Kalmyks to leave the Siberian lands, the Muscovite government had to reconcile itself with the Kalmyks' presence. The Kalmyks, for their part, were interested in peace with the Muscovites, as they needed to trade their livestock and ensure their rear flank was covered in the conflict with the Mongols of Altyn khan and the Kazakhs (Sanchirov 2009, 260-261).

Over the following years, the Kalmyks and Muscovites continued to exchange envoys (Bichurin 1834, 42). In fact, on 14 February 1608, a Kalmyk embassy was received by Tsar Vasiliu Shuiskii (1606-1610). And in 1609, according to Muscovite records, Kho-Urluk and other *taishis* pledged an oath of allegiance to the Tsar and promised "to be under the Tsar's hand" and to pay tribute. The Tsar, on his end, allowed the Kalmyks to "roam freely on our land" and ordered the Muscovite forces in Siberia not to fight the Kalmyks.¹⁷ Thus, the year 1609 is currently recognized as the beginning of Kalmyk's "voluntarily entry" into the Russian state. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, this date remains highly debatable and contested.

¹⁵ "Gramota Iz Prikaza Kazanskogo Dvortsa Tarskomu Voevode S. I. Gagarinu o Posylke Sluzhilykh Liudei v Kalmytskie Ulusy k Taisham Izeneiu i Dalaiu-Bogatyriu, a Takzhe k Kho-Urliuku i Kursuganu, dlia Privedeniia Ikh k Sherti." Vostlit.Info. http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Rus_mong_1/1-20/2.phtml?id=13432, accessed March 1, 2019.

¹⁶ "Gramota Iz Prikaza Kazanskogo Dvortsa Tarskomu Voevode I. V. Masal'skomu o Posylke k Kalmytskomu Taishe Kho-Urliuku Kazaka T. Alekseeva, O Privedenii K Sherti Kalmytskikh Taishei i o Razreshenii Bukharskim Kuptsam Torgovat' v Sibirskikh Gorodakh." Vostlit.Info. http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Rus_mong_1/1-20/4.phtml?id=13434, accessed March 1, 2019.

¹⁷ "Gramota iz Prikaza Kazanskogo Dvortsa Tarskomu Voevode I. V. Masal'skomu o Posylke Sluzhilykh Liudei k Kalmytskim Taisham Izeneiu i Dalaiu-Bogatyriu Dlia Podtverzhdeniia Sherti i o Razreshenii Besposhlinnoi Torgovli Kalmytskim Liudiam v Sibirskikh Gorodakh." Vostlit.Info. http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Rus_mong_1/1-20/8.phtml?id=13438, accessed March 1, 2019.

The prolonged war with the Mongols of Altyn khan and the threat of Kazakh raids forced the Kalmyks to continue moving westwards. In the 1630s *taishi* Kho-Urluk and fifty-thousand Kalmyk *yurts* reached the Caspian steppe (Bakunin [1761]1995, 21-22).¹⁸ Ousting the Nogays – their main competitors for the Caspian and Volga pastures – raiding Russian towns as well as Crimean and the Nogay settlements, the Kalmyks’ arrival disrupted the balance of power in the region. The departure of the Nogays from the Volga region exposed Russia’s southern frontier, and forced the government to repair old and construct new defense networks (Khodarkovsky 1992, 82). Although unhappy with the rise of the new uncontrolled nomadic power at its southern frontier, the beginning of the war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1632-1634) and the vulnerability of its southern borders to Crimeans and the Nogays compelled Moscow to at least tolerate – and at times accommodate – the Kalmyks. Furthermore, proven to be valuable warriors, the Kalmyks would later turn out to become desirable allies for Russia’s military ambitions (Maksimov 2002, 60; Sanchirov 2009, 309).

Until 1655, to secure Kalmyk participation in Russia’s military campaigns, the Muscovite government abandoned its demands for hostages and *yasak* payments from the nomads, opting instead for a system of annuities and rewards. Indeed, lacking effective instruments for direct control over its territories and population, the Muscovite government relied on indirect rule through co-opted local elites. Although the Tsar considered the Kalmyks to be subjects during this period, he permitted them to maintain a high degree of autonomy, similar to that of the Cossacks (Khodarkovsky 1992, 237). In 1655 the Kalmyks signed their first written agreement with the Russian authorities. Being included in the Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire (*Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*), the 1655 Russo-Kalmyk agreement referred to as “an oath of allegiance of Kalmyk envoys to the Tsar on behalf of all *ulus* people”.¹⁹ According to this document, the Kalmyks promised “to be forever loyal and obedient” to the Tsar, to participate in Russia’s military

¹⁸ “Istoriia Kalmytskikh Khanov.” Vostlit.Info.

http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Lunnij_svet/text5.phtml?id=12301, accessed March 3, 2019.

¹⁹ PSZ I, Vol. 1, (1655), No 144: 356-357.

campaigns and not to raid Russian settlements. Additionally, the Kalmyks agreed to free previously captured hostages. The Russian government, on the other hand, did not have any obligations towards the Kalmyks.²⁰

In 1657 the Kalmyks and Russia signed another oath. The new oath more clearly stipulated the obligations of the Russian government to the Kalmyks. In exchange for military assistance, Russia promised to provide the Kalmyk elite with annuities and luxurious presents (Sanchirov 2009, 310-311). According to the new agreement, the roaming territories were expanded, clearly delineated, and were to include lands on both sides of the Volga River: on the Crimean side of the Volga up to Tsaritsyn, and towards the Nogay side up to Samara. The Kalmyks were allowed to trade free of taxation in Volga towns (Kichikov 1994, 24). Additionally, the Kalmyks swore loyalty to the Russian Tsar and not to engage in contacts with the Ottoman sultan and Crimean khan (Ochirov 2012, 184).

Much of the research published in Russia argues that the 1655 and 1657 oaths defined Russo- Kalmyk relations as one of subject and suzerain and “finalized the process of the Kalmyks voluntarily joining the Russian state” that began in 1609, when the Kamyk embassy was received by Tsar Vasillii Shuiskii (Ilyumzhinov and Maksimov 1997, 24; Kichkov 1984, 28-31; Maksimov 2008a, 45; Ochirov 2012, 184; Sanchirov 2009, 311). The notion of the Kalmyks’ “voluntarily joining” (Rus.: *dobrovol’noe vkhozhdenie*), however, is a controversial issue. In his essay “Historical Anthropology of Eurasia” Schorkowitz (2012, 47) argued that the “voluntary joining” of the Russian state by the Kalmyks as well as other non-Russian peoples is “an ideological metaphor for colonial annexation”. Although celebrated with the great fanfare in today’s Russian Federation, this notion, “voluntarily joining”, ignores the fact that the incorporation of a majority of the non-Russian peoples in the Russian state was not as voluntary and conflict-free as portrayed in “patriotic historiography” (Schorkowitz 2012, 48). Regarding the issue of the Kalmyks’ “voluntary joining” the Russian state, I share the views of Schorkowitz and Khodarkovsky, who contrary to much of the research published in Russia, argue that from the initial contacts with Muscovite state in the early seventeenth century

²⁰ Ibid.

until the exodus of majority of Kalmyk people back to Dzungaria in 1771, the Kalmyk Khanate existed as an almost independent confederation (Khodarkovsky 1992, 67-72; Schorkowitz 1992, 241-247, 2001a, 326-329).

In his treatise from 1992 work Schorkowitz (1992, 241) argues that any interpretation which dates the recognition of Russian supremacy at the start of the seventeenth century is untenable. As such, he goes on to argue that treaties like the one signed in 1609 constitute purely goal-oriented, short-term alliances, agreed to by no more than part of the Oirat-Kalmyk aristocracy. Indeed, Schorkowitz cites renowned Mongolist and imperial official Aleksei Pozdneev who goes so far as to conclude that the Kalmyks never attached much importance to such treaties as these were mostly written in, for them unintelligible, Russian or Tatar. Furthermore, Schorkowitz argues that it would be erroneous to claim that Kalmyk integration into the Russian Empire had been concluded by the middle of the seventeenth century. At this point, after all, the so-called Kalmyk Khanate was at the height of its power. Additionally, the author continues, the signing of the 1656 and 1657 treaties by no means spelled the end of external relations between the Kalmyks and Persia, the Qing court, Tibet, or the Crimean Khanate (Schorkowitz 1992, 241-242). Also Khodarkovsky (1992, 90-91) argues that the Kalmyks interpreted the 1650s oaths as agreements between two equal parties not unlike a bond of friendship, agreeing on terms of peace and military cooperation. The Kalmyk interpretation of Russo-Kalmyk oaths considered breach of the agreement as paramount to voiding it. As noted by Khodarkovsky (1992, 92-96), several remaining documents indicated that even after signing the 1650s oaths, the chief Kalmyk Derbet Shukur Daichin *taishi* refers himself as a Khan and as an equal in his correspondence with the Tsar, and continues to maintain relations with the Qing, Persia and the Crimean khan.

While it is essentially incorrect to consider the oaths of 1655 and 1657 as marking the completion of the Kalmyks' "voluntary joining" the Russian state, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Tsar's primary objective was to transform the Kalmyks into loyal and obedient subjects willing to perform military service in exchange for payment. With this goal in mind, the government attempted to establish suzerain-subject ties

by means of traditional oaths of allegiance. To attain this goal, the Russian government employed several strategies that were modified over time depending on circumstances (Khodarkovsky 1992, 237).

Throughout the seventeenth and the first quarter of the eighteenth centuries Russia lacked the military capabilities and resources to secure its southern frontier against the raids of various nomadic peoples. An alliance with the Kalmyks provided Russia with the opportunity to defend its vulnerable southern frontier from other nomadic raiders (Sanchirov 2009, 351). However, lacking any instruments to pressure the Kalmyk elite, the Tsar had no choice but to accommodate Kalmyk demands in exchange for military assistance. The decentralized nature of the Kalmyk nobility, who were economically and politically independent of each other, presented a challenge to Russia whose politics required a single Kalmyk leader with sufficient authority over all Kalmyks who could then be pressured or co-opted. Consequently, Russian policy makers thought that by having one person in charge of all Kalmyks they would be able to hold him responsible and thus prevent Kalmyk raids along the Russian frontier. However, the Russian imperial government's policies also had drawbacks. After all, Ayuka khan, a leader who consolidated his authority over the majority of Kalmyks with Russian support, ended up pursuing his own goals, as well.

In the second half of the seventeenth century that very same Ayuka khan – then still chief *taishi* – aided by arms provided by the Russian government, was able to enhance his power to the level necessary to control a significant majority of Kalmyk forces (Khodarkovsky 1992, 237-238). In 1673 and 1677 Ayuka swore two oaths of allegiance: one to Tsar Aleksei Michailovich (1645-1676) and a second one to Tsar Fedor III Alekseevich (1676-1682) (Bakunin [1761]1995, 24-25). As had frequently happened in the past, the Russian government resorted to the oaths of allegiance prior to important military campaigns to ensure Kalmyk participation (Riess 1983, 232-238). Although both sides probably understood what was expected from them in practical terms. Russia most likely viewed the oath as a codification of the relationship between suzerain and subject; giving the suzerain the right to exercise political control over the subject. This might explain the demand for the Kalmyks to

sever their relations with other foreign powers. As said earlier, Ayuka khan and the Kalmyk elite are more likely to have viewed the oaths as agreements between two equal allies. However, regardless of what the two parties thought of one another, Ayuka needed Russia's support in eliminating his internal rivals, consolidate his power, and further expand his power base (Palmov [1921]1992, 51-53). Despite all this, once again both parties ended up dissatisfied, as not much later, the Kalmyks withdrew their military assistance. In turn, Russian annuities were regularly delayed and significantly less valuable than originally agreed (Khodarkovsky 1992, 109-110).

Russo-Kalmyk relations further deteriorated between 1680 and 1683, as Kalmyks raided Russian towns. Indeed, as Moscow was preoccupied with repressing Bashkir, Mari and Chuvash uprisings, Ayuka's forces even entered the Kazan and Ufa governorates, where they were joined by a number of Bashkir rebels (Bakunin [1761]1995, 26; Bichurin 1834, 167; Palmov [1921]1992, 48-49). Around the same time, Ayuka was bestowed various gifts from and exchanged several envoys with the Ottoman sultan and the Crimean khan (Khodarkovsky 1992, 116-119).

In 1697, after the demise of Azov, Ayuka khan and Prince Golitsyn signed another Russo-Kalmyk agreement. The agreement differed from previous ones as the document was an agreement between two equal powers. As such, it did not insist on the status of the Kalmyks as being submissive and did not impose any obligations on them (Nefed'ev 1834, 30-31; Palmov [1921]1992, 51-52). Unlike most of the previous oaths, the 1697 Russo-Kalmyk agreement did not state that the Kalmyks were to be "obedient" or "loyal" subjects. On the contrary, the agreement contained six clauses that concerned the Russian government's commitments and responsibilities to the Kalmyks. The first clause determined the size of the shipments of military equipment the Kalmyks were to receive in case of war with the Bukharans, the Karakalpaks, or the Kazakhs. The second clause granted Ayuka khan and his people the right to roam freely near the sovereign's grand towns. The third clause stipulated that if Kalmyks were to flee the enemies while participating in the sovereign's military campaigns, they were to be provided safety and refuge in Russian towns. The fourth clause

prohibited Russians from providing refuge for or baptizing those Kalmyks who ran away to Russian towns. If a *voivode* were to break this clause, he was to pay Ayuka thirty rubles per person. The fifth clause stated that Ayuka and his people were to be transported across the Volga River anywhere between Chernyi Iar and Saratov. The sixth and final clause promised that the Russian sovereign would send letters to Ufa, Yaik, and Don towns that would order the Cossaks and the Bashkirs not to start quarrels with and to live in peace with the Kalmyks.²¹

The supremacy of Ayuka over the rest of the Kalmyk *taishi* was officially confirmed in 1690, when Ayuka was bestowed the title of khan by the Dalai Lama (Bakunin [1761]1995, 26).²² Considering Ayuka to be his subject, the Tsar initially refused to recognize his new status which was, after all, conferred upon him by a foreign power. Contemporary Russian documents refer to Ayuka as chief *taishi* until 1708, when the growing need of Kalmyk military assistance compelled Peter the Great to finally address Ayuka as khan (Khodarkovsky 1992, 16, 126; Riess 1983, 93). Furthermore, as noted by Khodarkovsky (1992, 16), as a khan was supposedly the ruler of a khanate, the word khanate slowly came into use in reference to the Kalmyks around the same time.

The traditional role of the khan in Kalmyk society was limited to several major functions. The khan was commander-in-chief in large military campaigns, had significant political influence over Kalmyk affairs through the privilege of appointing his own *zaisangs* to the Kalmyk high court (*zargo*). Russian policies towards the Kalmyk khan, however, gave the holder of the office new privileges. By the grace of his agreement with the Russian authorities, the khan was now able to amass more wealth through his contact with Moscow as he could send more frequent embassies to the capital and receive larger payments and more valuable gifts (Khodarkovsky 1992, 174). Additionally, Russia's military support gave Ayuka khan the confidence needed to act more boldly against dissenting *taishis*. Thus altering the balance of power, Russian interference affected the position of khan, turning it into a more centralized

²¹ PSZ I, Vol. 3 (1689-1699), No 1591: 329-331.

²² "Istoriia Kalmytskikh Khanov." Vostlit.Info.

http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Lunnij_svet/text5.phtml?id=12301, accessed March 3, 2019.

and powerful office (Khodarkovsky 1992, 174; Palmov [1921]1992, 58-59). However, while the title of khan legitimized and significantly increased Ayuka khan's authority, his actual level of control over the Kalmyk clans and *uluses* was limited. The Kalmyks essentially remained a decentralized confederation of tribes (Khodarkovsky 1992, 16).

Despite this strengthening of the khan's authority, it is important to note that the status of the Kalmyk Khanate at this point in history remains hotly debated. Some argue that the fledgling khanate cannot be considered an "independent entity" but rather "a vassal of Russia" (Sanchirov 2009, 350-351). That being said and judged by the account of Russo-Kalmyk relations, it is probably safe to assume that the Kalmyk lands and tribes could – at the time – neither be considered fully compliant with the demands of the Russian authorities, nor fully independent. Thus, it could be considered counter-productive to give Russo-Kalmyk relations a single uniform label across time and space. If anything, as argued by Khodarkovsky (1992, 71), each side viewed relations with the other through the prism of their respective political systems. As such, from the moment of initial contact in 1606, the Muscovites viewed the Kalmyks as their vassals, and interpreted each act of disobedience as breaking the oath of allegiance, and viewed them as unruly subjects; whereas the Kalmyks viewed themselves as independent allies of the Muscovites, with the right to act as such.

As time passed, intensifying relations with Russia also affected Kalmyk society. In order to be able to afford luxury products produced by the Russians, Kalmyk noblemen strengthened their grip on Kalmyk commoners, raising taxes and demanding more frequent payments. Unable to cope with the increased burden, more and more Kalmyks chose to flee to Russian settlements. The number of run-aways increased in the eighteenth century, and Ayuka khan demanded Russian settlements to return them to their *uluses* (Palmov [1921]1992, 58-59). It was a combination of the danger involved in the struggle between different Kalmyk noblemen and the search for a better life, which motivated many Kalmyks to flee to Russian settlements. In the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, these Kalmyks were mostly baptized and joined the Cossacks. Those who were baptized were freed from persecution and taxation (Dordzhieva 1995, 32-34, 37-38). In 1737

baptized Kalmyks were even granted a place of their own to live in which became known as Stavropol-on-Volga²³ (Georgi 1799, 21-22). This was to be a place for Kalmyk acculturation, where they settled with their own nobility, and were steadily assimilated into the majority sedentary population. However, Georgi (1799, 21) also noted that this measure proved largely unsuccessful as the baptized Kalmyks continued to live in yurts, to herd cattle, and to avoid practicing agriculture. Even during his travels among the Kalmyks in 1802-1803, Benjamin Bergmann (1804, 272) observed that these baptized Kalmyks “have their lamaist sacred books, offering utensils and incense, and, though their priests wear worldly clothes and let their hair grow, when they meet in their homes, they put on their lamaistic robes and perform lamaistic ceremonies”.

Already in the final years of Ayuka’s rule, the Russian imperial government became less lenient towards Ayuka’s disobedience. The appointment of Artemii Volynskii as governor of Astrakhan reversed the traditional Russian approach towards the Kalmyks. The goal remained the same: to turn the Kalmyks into obedient subjects, to curb their raids and secure their military assistance. The difference was that, having improved defences and modernized its army, the Russian government felt more secure and increasingly confident. The maturing Russian Empire wanted to undermine the power of the khan and promoted civil strife among the Kalmyks (Batmaev 2009, 366-367, 398-399; Riess 1983, 324-328).

In the 1720s and 1730s, with the growth of Russia’s military capabilities, its way of dealing with the Kalmyks was increasingly infused with confidence. Improved defenses and the conquest of Azov (1695-6) made Russia’s southern frontier more secure against nomadic raids, thus decreasing the importance of Kalmyk military assistance (Batmaev 2009, 364-365). Under these new circumstances the government began to seek increased control over the Kalmyks. The conditions necessary to achieve this goal were better than ever. After the death of Ayuka khan (1724), the Kalmyks descended into a struggle for succession – after all, the title of khan had become more coveted than before. The government did not waste this opportunity and supported different factions to instigate further internal strife (Riess 1983,

²³ Nowadays the name of the town is Tolyatti.

329-345). As a result of these internal conflicts the Kalmyk herds were thinned out, and due to heavy casualties, their overall military strength decreased (Bakunin [1761]1995, 41-44).

Russia's increased influence over the Kalmyks also manifested itself in new political arrangements. After the death of Ayuka khan, the government introduced the position of viceroy (*namestnik*) of the Kalmyk Khanate. Although Komandzhaev (2009a, 30-31) argues that the Kalmyk aristocracy viewed the appointment of a viceroy as a temporary measure, in fact from 1741 onwards until the Kalmyk exodus in 1771, the government continued to carry by far the most weight in selecting the viceroy and thus the khan. Furthermore, the traditional signs of the khan's power, such as the sabre, armor, a sable fur coat and hat were provided to him by the Russian authorities, not by the Dalai Lama. This demonstrates a shift in the center where the khans' legitimacy and power originated: in Russia rather than in Tibet.

In 1741 when he was appointed viceroy of the Kalmyk People, Donduk-Dashi gave an oath to the emperor. He promised not to maintain any contacts with other peoples or states, nor send them embassies. The new viceroy further stated he would not force baptized Kalmyks to return, nor accept them if they were to do so of their own accord. As was not unusual at the time, he sent his son Assarai to a Russian city where he lived and died as a hostage at a young age (Palmov [1921]1992, 75). The act of giving his son as a hostage, too, illustrated a decline in power and increased Kalmyk dependence on Russia. Previous Kalmyk rulers had refrained from vowing to interrupt all diplomatic contacts with other rulers; rather to the contrary, they generally sustained extensive external relations with other states and peoples. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, almost all of the Kalmyks' diplomatic relations had broken down. Similarly, previous Kalmyk rulers had not surrendered their children as hostages up until this point. Although the son of Donduk-Dashi was living in luxury in Astrakhan surrounded by people serving him, Donduk Dashi's decision reflects a significant change nonetheless (Palmov [1921]1992, 75).

The relations with St. Petersburg had also been deteriorating due to the growing number of economic disputes. Russian and Kalmyk economies along the Volga estuary were radically different: Russian activities focused on fishing, trade and agriculture; whereas the

Kalmyk *uluses* continued with their traditional patterns of nomadic life. An increased influx of Russian settlers soon increased tensions. The in-migration caused a decline in pastures available for the Kalmyk herds to graze. It did not last long before the number of Russo-Kalmyk disputes proliferated, and the Kalmyks entered a period of economic decline. Many impoverished Kalmyks were forced to look for work in Russian fisheries and salt mines, abandoning their traditional way of life (Batmaev 2009, 330-336; Khodarkovsky 1992, 220-221). Despite increased tensions, in 1757 the Russian authorities confirmed Donduk-Dashi as khan and his son Ubashi as viceroy. The confirmation went ahead to ensure Kalmyk military support in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), as the internal strife among the Kalmyks could jeopardize their ability to send cavalymen (Maksimov 2008, 97-98)

The decline which had started shortly before Donduk-Dashi's reign, continued to worsen under his son and heir Ubashi. Under Ubashi, the Russian authorities continued to tip the scales of the Kalmyk balance of power, yet this time they attempted to do so by reforming the *zargo* – the Kalmyk khans' judicial and legislative council. To further diminish the khan's power, the government redistributed the seats in the *zargo* from the members of the khan's *ulus* to the representatives of major Kalmyk *uluses* in proportion to their respective populations. Consequently, rather than being composed just of *zaisangs* and clergymen from the khan's own *ulus*, from that moment on influence within the *zargo* was more evenly spread among the *uluses* (Komandzhaev 2009a, 41-42). In a sense, the Russian authorities truly viewed the Kalmyk institutions very much from their own perspective. Empress Catherine II (1762-96) when mentioning the institution wrote of the *zargo* as the "Kalmyk government" (Khodarkovsky 1992, 238).

Meanwhile, the deterioration of economic conditions meant that the out-migration of Kalmyks into Russian settlements continued. Many of those fleeing became Orthodox Christian. As this meant that *noyons* were losing their tax-paying subjects, the cycle of impoverishment also affected the elite. Additionally, the wave of migration meant that the Buddhist clergy was losing its flock, too. The internal political struggle among the Kalmyk nobility and the increasing number of Kalmyk refugees raised the question of sedentarization

and settling the Kalmyks, however the government decided it would be premature. After all, the state still needed the Kalmyks to protect its frontier and the settlement of Kalmyks would create a vacuum for other powers. Finally, a government commission felt that it was always useful to have mobile troops that could be quickly deployed in wars with the Ottoman empire.²⁴ The Collegium of Foreign Affairs, however, allowed *taishi* Zamian to settle his people as an experiment.²⁵

The idea of departing to Dzungaria was present among the Kalmyk leaders for some time. Indeed, according to Krueger (1974, 31), already in 1714, the Qing embassy that visited khan Ayuki offered the latter to return to Dzungaria. Nikolai Palmov ([1921]1992, 56-57) also cited a letter from *taishi* Zamian who wrote that already Ayuki khan was contemplating leaving Russia. However, the lack of consensus among Kalmyk *taishis*, the concern of dangerous journey through adverse Kazakh lands, and the uncertainty about the Kalmyk political status upon arrival to Dzungaria impeded former from taking any actions (Khodarkovsky 1992, 229-230; Palmov [1921]1992, 57). It was not until the 1760s, under the increasing control of the Russian government over Kalmyk administrative affairs, with deteriorating economic conditions induced by Russian colonization of the steppe, and its increasing demands for Kalmyk military support, as well as the threat of Christianization and sedentarization forced the Kalmyks to leave the Caspian steppe (Georgi 1799, 5; Maksimov 2002, 141-142; Sanchirov 2009, 423-424). On January 5, 1771 Ubashi led 30, 909 tents across the Volga River back to Dzungaria. This dissertation, however, focuses on the 11, 198 tents that were not able to make the crossing because the Volga's melting ice left them stranded on the river's west bank (Palmov [1921]1992, 99).

After the majority of Kalmyks left, on October 19, 1771 Catherine II issued a decree that abolished the titles of khan and viceroy, and subordinated the Kalmyk *noyons* directly to the administration in Astrakhan. Thus, the Kalmyks lost their territorial autonomy and, although they were governed by a Kalmyk aristocracy, in the administrative sense, the Kalmyk

²⁴ PSZ I, Vol. 16 (1764), No. 12198: 827-829

²⁵ Ibid.: 831-832.

uluses were basically equated with the *uezd*²⁶ (Belousov 2009, 452). Inspectors (*pristav*) were appointed to each *noyon* to oversee the order in the *uluses*. The *noyons* preserved the rights to govern their *uluses*. However, as was previously mentioned, an *ulus* of a *noyon* who did not have a direct male heir would be transferred to direct state control, thus becoming a “state-owned *ulus*”. Such *uluses* would be governed by appointees from a pool of Kalmyk *noyons* or local *zaisangs* (Palmov [1921]1992, 114). The *zargo* – now made up of representatives of the three largest Kalmyk tribes: Torgut, Derbet and Khoshut – continued to resolve Kalmyk judicial affairs based on Kalmyk traditional laws. However, all decisions were to be approved by the Astrakhan Governor (Palmov [1921]1992, 114). The Kalmyk Affairs Department, a part of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs (*Departament Kalmytskikh Del pri Kollegii Inostrannykh Del*), was abolished. In lieu thereof, a Provincial Chancellery for Kalmyk Affairs under the Astrakhan Governor was established on January 26, 1771. The function of the Provincial Chancellery for Kalmyk Affairs was to oversee the Kalmyk aristocracy, to collect information about the political situation in the *uluses*, to mediate conflicts, to implement the government’s orders, and to supervise the Kalmyk aristocracy’s foreign contacts (Belousov 2009, 457-458). After 1771, Kalmyk affairs were managed by several different administrative bodies, until 1800 when Emperor Paul I restored the post of a Kalmyk viceroy (Belousov 2009, 459-464).

Under Emperor Paul I, some degree of Kalmyk autonomy was briefly restored. Thus in 1800 he appointed Chuchei Tundutov, a *noyon* of the Baga-Derbet *ulus* to the post of viceroy. Chuchei Tundutov was granted the authority to govern all Kalmyks and was bestowed with many generous gifts from the emperor himself. The same document which reestablished the post of viceroy also restored the Kalmyk court or *zargo* in a capacity not so different from what it had once been: made up of eight *zaisangs* under the chairmanship of a *noyon* (i.e. nine persons).²⁷ Another decree issued by Paul I granted the Kalmyks the freedom to conduct their religious rituals. Lama Soibin *bagshi* “due to his loyalty to Us [the emperor]” was

²⁶ A Russian administrative territorial subdivision.

²⁷ PSZ I, Vol. 26 (1800), No. 19599: 340-341.

awarded a charter that confirmed him as the chief religious hierarch of all Kalmyk people.²⁸ The Tsar also bestowed valuable gifts on Lama Soibin *bagshi* and awarded him an annual salary of six hundred rubles.²⁹

The appointment of Chuchei Tundutov as Kalmyk viceroy, however, did not mean a restoration of real authority of the viceroy over the Kalmyks. The title, presents and the accompanying official letter were superficial signs of the viceroy's position; in reality his authority was very limited, indeed. Already in 1801, the new Emperor Alexander I, despite confirming Chuchei Tundutov as viceroy, further limited his power: the Kalmyk viceroy was subjected to the authority of the Astrakhan Military Governor. Additionally, Alexander I established the post of Chief Inspector of the Kalmyk People. This was a Russian official who was in charge of Kalmyk affairs in their relations with the Russian administration. The *ulus* inspectors continued to serve in each *ulus* to ensure order there (Palmov [1921]1992, 120). In 1803 with the death of Chuchei Tundutov no new Kalmyk viceroy was appointed. Upon the death of Lama Soibin in 1806, the post of chief religious hierarch he once occupied also remained unfilled.

Although the titles of viceroy and khan were abolished immediately after the majority of Kalmyk tribes fled the Empire, it took the government several decades to manage a comprehensive administrative incorporation of the Kalmyks into the imperial structures. Meanwhile, the establishment of the ministerial system in the early nineteenth century contributed to making Russia's bureaucratic system increasingly efficient (Shakibi 2006, 432). Before moving on to discussing the Kalmyks' further incorporation into Russia's administrative and legal systems, we shall, first, explore their religion.

²⁸ PSZ I, Vol. 26 (1800), No. 19600: 341.

²⁹ Ibid.

2.4. Mongols and Buddhism: An Alliance of the Religious and the Political

The current section outlines the Mongol's adoption of Buddhism and their model of relations between religious and political authorities. The particular characteristics and phenomena described below are a key to the understanding of historical developments as it is with these ideas on relations between religious and political power that the Kalmyks arrived to the Caspian steppe.

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the Oirats were Western Mongols, who were part of Chinggis khan's empire as an allied tribe. And although it is very likely that the Mongols first came in contact with Central Asian Buddhism through their neighbors, the Uighurs in particular, contacts between Mongols and Tibetan Buddhism intensified in the early thirteenth century after Chinggis khan conquered the Tangut Empire Xixia (Kitinov 2004, 61-63). This expansion meant that the Mongol Empire now bordered Tibet. During one of his subsequent incursions into Central Tibet, prince Godan, in 1246 invited Saskya Pandita to his court to receive advice from him on religious matters. Sagaster (2007, 385) goes so far as to dub this "the actual genesis of Mongolian relations with Tibet in general, and with Tibetan Buddhism in particular".

The strong link between Mongol leadership and Buddhist *sangha* was epitomized later during Qubilai khan's reign of the Yuan Dynasty. Initially, all religions in territories under Mongol control were treated equally: they enjoyed the same rights and tax exemptions. However, during Qubilai khan's reign, Tibetan Buddhism increasingly received preferential treatment (particularly the Sakya school) (Kitinov 2004, 76-78; Sagaster 2007, 390-393; Taupier 2012, 203-204). For his religious mentor Drogon Chogyal Phagpa, head of the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, Qubilai khan established the office of "imperial teacher" (Kitinov 2004, 76). As imperial teacher, this Buddhist monk had a wide range of religious and administrative powers, which included supervising the *sangha*, praying for the emperor, and performing rituals (Sagaster 2007, 392).

The rule of Qubilai khan saw the formalization of a special model of relationship between the Buddhist monastic community and secular rulers. Known as the patron-priest

relationship, this model assumes close connections between secular and religious authorities in which the secular ruler acts as a patron giving alms to the Buddhist monastic community, and the Buddhist monastic community in exchange provides religious guidance and takes charge of religious questions. Within the patron-priest model, the secular ruler could also be regarded as a universal Buddhist ruler – *Chakravartin* (Ruegg 1991, 448-449). *Chakravartin* literally translates from Sanskrit as “wheel-turning emperor”, “universal monarch” or “ruler of the world”; and according to Buddhist tradition, signifies an ideal monarch who rules over all four continents. He conquers his rivals with mere charisma and power of persuasion, and rules his subjects in accordance with *Dharma* (Buddhist teachings and law) (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 173-174). With the end of the Yuan Dynasty, Buddhism lost the significant political patronage it had up until that point received from the ruling elites. Although it lost its prime position among noblemen, Buddhism never disappeared among the Mongols completely (Sagaster 2007, 395-396; Serruys 1963, 181-213).

At the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries an authoritative Buddhist monk of the Sakya school, Lama Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), founded a new school of Tibetan Buddhism named Gelugpa (*dGelugs- pa*) – “the virtuous way”. Specifically, Gelugpa teaching placed particular emphasis on monasticism and scholastic training. From the sixteenth century Gelugpa teaching began to spread ever more widely among the Mongols. Much of the research argues that such a fast-paced spread of Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongols had an underlying reason. In particular, it was suggested that the succession wars among the various Chingisid lineages and especially the rivalry between the Khalkha Mongols and the Oirats, increased the interest of the Mongol ruling elites in Buddhism in the sixteenth century. This new orientation was connected with the search for a force that could facilitate the unity of the Mongol peoples and strengthen the political position of one single ruler (Sagaster 2007, 397; Skrynnikova and Pubaev 1988, 9).

The spread of Gelugpa Buddhism culminated in the meeting of Altan khan (1507-82) of the Tümed Mongols with Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588) – the Gelugpa hierarch. Reflecting Qubilai khan’s relationship with Phagpa and thus following the patron-priest model, Altan

khan bequeathed unto Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588) the title of Dalai Lama. The latter, in turn, bequeathed upon Altan khan the status of *Chakravartin* (Sagaster 2007, 396-397). The religio-political alliance between Mongols and Gelugpa further deepened as the fourth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso (1589-1617) was a grandson of Altan khan; and within the span of forty years, the Mongols fully embraced Tibetan Buddhist concepts and practices (Kollmar-Paulenz 2016, 240; Taupier 2012, 204-205).

By the second decade of the seventeenth century, Gelugpa Buddhism had taken root among many Mongol tribes, including the Oirats (Sagaster 2007, 403). In 1616 the Oirat noblemen agreed to give one of their sons to the monastery, which marked the beginning of their adoption of Gelugpa Buddhism (Taupier 2015, 27-28). Thus, Zaya Pandita (1599-1662) - the adoptive son of Oirat khan Baibagas became a particularly prominent figure in the spread of Buddhism among the Western Mongols. After studying in Tibet, he returned to his homelands to further spread Buddhism among the Oirats. Zaya Pandita initially developed the script for the Oirat language – Clear Script (*Todoo Bichiq*) – to make Buddhist texts more accessible for a wider population (Taupier 2015, 30-33).

After the seventeenth century a majority of the Mongols fell under the influence of the Manchu's Qing dynasty, the independent Oirats needed their own khan to elevate their status in comparison to their rivals: the Kazakhs and other Central Asian peoples. In 1678 the Dalai Lama bestowed the title of *khan* on Galdan Boshugtu of the Oirat Khoshut tribe. In 1690 the leader of the Kalmyks at the time, Ayuka of the Torgut tribe, was also to be confirmed as khan by the Dalai Lama.³⁰ In fact, as noted by Miyawaki (1992, 268-270), this was a paradigmatic shift in the legitimization of a ruler's succession: from references to Chingisid origin and belonging, towards confirmation by the Dalai Lama. Thus, Buddhism spread among the Mongols with the active support of governing elites, as secular authorities found

³⁰ "Istoriia Kalmytskikh Khanov." Vostlit.Info.
http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Lunnij_svet/text5.phtml?id=12301, accessed March 3, 2019.

Buddhism to be convenient because it entailed the idea of unity, which was so important for the foundation of a centralized polity.

There are at least two major events which have played a significant role in the Gelugpa school's dominance among the Western Mongols tribes. First, the Oirat khan's decision to answer the regent of the fifth Dalai Lama's call for support in his struggle for primacy with the so-called Red Hats, adherents of the Karma-pa School. When in 1642 Gushi khan of the Khoshut tribe defeated the regents of the southern Tibetan gTsang region – fervent Red Hat adherents – he granted the fifth Dalai Lama these captured territories, making the Dalai Lama – and thus the Gelugpa School both spiritually and politically dominant in Tibet (Dreyfus 2003, 26- 28; Sagaster 2007, 408).

The second key event to Gelugpa dominance among the Oirats was the 1640 Mongol-Oirat assembly at Tarbagatay. In this meeting the leaders of different groups (of the so called Döchin Dörbön, i.e. "Forty (Mongols) and Four (Oirats)"), including Kho-Urluk *taishi* who travelled from the Caspian steppes, adopted the Great Code of Laws (*Tsaacin Bichig* or *Yeke Tsaaci*; *Mong.*: *Ик Цаажин Бичг*) – a common collection of laws that would regulate the life of their people. Threatened by the growing power of the Manchu's, the assembly was an attempt at reconciling the Khalkhas and the Oirats after centuries of animosity. The Great Code of Laws provided legal recognition of independence and sovereignty of multiple *uluses* within the Mongol world (Munkh-Erdene 2010, 276-277). For the Oirats, this alliance had yet another level of significance, as noted by Atwood (2004, 421), it “ratified the Oirat's partial adoption of Chinggisid titles”. Furthermore, Munkh-Erdene (2010, 276-277) argued that the 1640 Great Code of Law was the Central Asian equivalent of the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia that not merely recognized a polity's sovereignty over its territory but also enhanced religious tolerance.

Research on the Great Code of Laws disputes the degree of Buddhism's influence. Some authors argue that the provisions of the Great Code were strongly influenced by Buddhist canonical laws (Gurliand 1904, 142; Leontovich 1879, 188; Ulanov, Badmaev and Holland 2017, 310). Others point out that the Great Code was based on traditional and

customary Mongol laws, and that there was no influence of Buddhist canonical law (Golstunskii 1880, 10-11). A third opinion suggests that while limited, there were some influences of Buddhism in the formulation of the Great Code (Kurapov 2010, 264; Riazanovskii 1931, 40-41; Sazykin 1980, 132-133). While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to investigate the degree of Buddhism's influence on the formulation of the Great Code, we, nevertheless, address the provisions of the Great Code that concerned Buddhism.

The Great Code granted Buddhism the status of official religion for all Mongols. The Buddhist *sangha* played an important role in preparing the assembly, and it was attended by three reincarnated lamas: Amonghasiddhi Manjurshri, Aksobyha Manjushri and Inzan Rinpoche – the first deputy of the Dalai Lama among the Mongols and Oirats (Golstunskii 1880, 35). The opening line of the Great Code states that the parties to the agreement worship Shakyamuni Buddha, the Holy Tsongkhapa, the Dalai Lama, and the Panchen Lama (Golstunskii 1880, 35). The legal and economic protection for monks and monasteries stipulated in the Great Code also aided in ensuring the primacy of Buddhism. The Great Code even went so far as to outlaw shamans and their followers (Golstunskii 1880, 55-56). Furthermore, the Buddhist monastics were exempt from public duties such as forced labour and military service, and relieved from the obligation to provide horses for the cart and horse service (*podvod*) (Golstunskii 1880, 39). While providing the *sangha* with legal protection, the Great Code assumed that the temporal authorities served as arbiters of religious purity: the temporal authorities were to punish the *sangha* for breaking their monastic vows (Golstunskii 1880, 39).

Summarized in the words of Baatr Kitinov (2016, 29), “the long-standing de facto unity of the State and *Sangha* had its judicious form in the Mongol-Oirat laws. Thus, the legal basis for Khan's power was built by formulating the interaction of secular and religious powers as the condition sine qua non for the administration of a nomadic state”. The Great Code reconfirmed the priest-patron relationship between the Oirat-Mongol rulers and the *sangha*. Indeed, Buddhism was one of the unifying factors for the Oirat and Mongol tribes, and the

sangha acted as mediators; the secular rulers patronized Buddhism and provided it with legal protection and maintained the *sangha*'s purity.

2.5. Kalmyks and Buddhism: Keeping the Faith

Although they had migrated to Southern Siberia, and later on to the Caspian steppes, the Kalmyks, despite their distance to the center of their religion and co-religionists, remained adherents of Buddhism. Aleksei Pozdnev (1887, 10-11) observed that Buddhism “directed not only the conduct, but also the judgements and intentions of all the Mongols”. Following the established tradition, the Kalmyk political elites continued to patronize Buddhism granting generous material support to the Buddhist *sangha*. Buddhism, on its end, legitimized the rule of Kalmyk rulers. As nicely summed up in the words of the well-known Mongolist and the author of an early Kalmyk grammar book, Alexander Vasil’evich Popov, who visited the Kalmyks in the 1830s: “the Kalmyk khans that moved to the Volga steppes, most likely out of fear that their subjects would accept Christianity, in every possible way were trying to support their religious spirit.”³¹

Current research suggests that Buddhism was instrumental for the Kalmyk political elites in upholding authority. Ulanov, Badmaev and Holland (2017, 310) argued that the Kalmyk political elites attempted to strengthen the position of Buddhism through the inclusion of Buddhist canonical laws in the Kalmyk legal codes, while Buddhist norms began to serve as a mechanism of societal control for Kalmyk communities. Kitinov argued that the distance from their religious center and being surrounded by Christians and Muslims made it necessary for the Kalmyk rulers to obtain a sacralization of their power. The “sacralization”³² of power was achieved through obtaining the support from the Dalai Lama. As such, the title of “khan” was bestowed by the Dalai Lama and symbolized his support for the khan’s rule (Kitinov 2004, 122). Indeed, in the early 1650s the Kalmyk chief *taishi* Shukur Daichin was

³¹ RGIA: 733: 42: 101: 21b-22a: Калмыцкие Ханы, переселившись в Приволжские степи, вероятно из опасения, чтобы подданные их не принимали Христианство, всячески старались поддерживать религиозный дух их.

³² On the notion of this term see: Moebius 2020.

bestowed the title of “khan”, which, according to Kalmyk historian, Gabang Sharab, Shukur Daichin refused to accept, as “there are plenty of others [*taishis*] just like him”.³³ Several decades later in 1690, the Dalai Lama bestowed the title of khan on Shukur Daichin’s grandson Ayuka (1669-1724), who happily accepted, thus becoming the first Kalmyk khan (Nefed’ev 1834, 28).³⁴ According to Kitinov (2004, 122), Ayuka’s descendants up until Ubashi, who in 1771 led the majority of the Kalmyks back to Dzungaria, were regarded by the Dalai Lama as “khans”.

The growing dependence on Russia did not stop the Kalmyk political elites from patronizing Buddhism. Their continued support for Buddhism was reflected in the *Toktols*. The *Toktols* are also known as khan Donduk Dashi’s code of laws. Composed approximately between 1741 and 1753, the *Toktols* aimed to supplement the 1640 Great Code in order to suit the socio-political realities of the increased influence of the Russian state (Schorkowitz 1992, 439). Similar to the Great Code of 1640, the *Toktols* touched upon a variety of issues, however, we only focus on the provisions regarding religious matters.

Donduk-Dashi’s code of laws was composed jointly by secular and religious authorities. The Buddhist *sangha* was represented by Lama Baldan-Gabtsu, Lama Lonric-Tsordzhi and *gelong* Abo; while secular authorities were represented by Donduk-Dashi khan, Radzhabma Sandzha Dzhamtso, Baldan Gatsu, Lonri Tsordzhi and Nagbana Sandzhi. Similar to the Great Code, the *Toktols* open with praises to Buddhist deities Manjushri, Vajradara and Lama Zaya Pandita, thus once again reflecting the continued importance of Buddhism for the Kalmyks (Golstunskii 1880, 60-61).

The *Toktols* reconfirmed the primary position of Buddhism, as well as the synergy of religious and secular power. Embracing the role of patrons of Buddhism, the Kalmyk secular authorities promised to ensure the *sangha*’s purity and to promote Buddhism among its

³³ Подобных ему много имеется. Gabang, Sharab. “Tales of the Oirats.” Vostlit.Info. http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Lunnij_svet/text4.phtml?id=12298, accessed March 10, 2019.

³⁴ Istoriiia Kalmytskikh Khanov.” Vostlit.Info. http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Mongol/Lunnij_svet/text5.phtml?id=12301, accessed March 3, 2019.

people. Indeed, the *Toktols* included provisions aimed at reinforcing discipline among the Buddhist monastic community and strengthening devotion to Buddhism among lay believers. The provision “Laws for the Clergy” stressed that monks must not violate the four fundamental monastic vows, these include not to kill, not to lie, not to cheat and to be celibate; and stipulated the punishment of disrobement for those who did not abide. The *Toktols* also stipulated punishment for leaving the monastery, alcohol consumption and non-observance of fasting days. Aside from instituting sanctions, the *Toktols* also stated that good conduct must be rewarded (Golstunskii 1880, 61-62).

In addition to regulating the *sangha's* conduct, the *Toktols* also included provisions that dealt with the religious practices of laymen. In fact, the law aimed at reinforcing religious devotion by demanding that each layman “must read what he can, and especially *mani*³⁵ [...]”. At the same time, the *Toktols* stipulated a punishment for laymen who did not fulfill the eight Mahayana precepts on designated Buddhist observance days, that is to avoid engaging in the following: killing, stealing, sexual contact, lying and deceiving, taking toxicants, eating more than one meal a day, sitting on high, proudly sitting on an expensive bed or seat, and wearing jewelry. The degree of punishment varied depending on one’s social class: non-abiding noblemen were to surrender a three-year-old sheep, while the commoners were to pay a fine and were to be subjected to corporal punishment (Golstunskii 1880, 62).

The extant research points out to a cultural and political reasons for the support of Buddhism by Donduk Dashi. Ulanov, Badmaev and Holland (2017, 305-306) noted that “the *Toktols* addressed the strengthening position of Buddhism as a source of cultural identity and socio-political organization within the Kalmyk polity”. A different argument was made by Galina Dordzhieva (1977, 12) who stated that by demanding the following of Buddhist rituals, Donduk-Dashi and his allies saw religion as a tool of ideological influence on the masses and as one of the measures to support the connections with the rest of the Mongol world and as the counteraction to Tsarist Christianization policies. While these arguments are, indeed quite convincing, it is important to note that the political reasons behind Donduk-Dashi

³⁵ This is a reference to the classic mantra “*om mani padme hum*”.

khan's attempt to reinforce the primacy of Buddhism among the Kalmyk were strongly intertwined with economic reasons. An increase in Russian settlements in the Caspian steppes and along the Volga River on the one hand and internal struggle among the Kalmyk aristocracy on the other, led to a decline of the Kalmyk economy. Some economically deprived Kalmyks chose to be baptized, as the Orthodox missionaries offered cash payments, tax-exemptions and pardons for those facing criminal charges. Although these baptized Kalmyks were Orthodox only on paper and, in reality, remained adherent to Buddhism, these baptisms strongly affected the Kalmyk aristocracy, as baptized Kalmyks were exempt from their duties to the Kalmyk aristocracy and were moved to Russian settlements. This economic rationale is one that the analyses mentioned above failed to take into account, yet which this dissertation believes cannot be omitted from a comprehensive understanding of Buddhism's prominence in the *Toktols*.

In the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, the Kalmyk political elite's support of Buddhism allowed the latter to flourish among the Kalmyks. As noted by Aleksei Pozdnev "the internal structure of the Lamaist commune [*sangha*] among our Kalmyks in the first hundred and even one-hundred-and-fifty years after their migration to Russia remained the same as in Dzungaria."³⁶ The Kalmyks considered the Tibetan Dalai Lama to be the head of their faith and received from him the sanction for each of their religious undertakings. The Dalai Lama provided them with spiritual books, images, and other religious artefacts and sent his educated clerics to the Astrakhan steppes, where they were to improve the understanding of Buddhist teachings, if not among the common people, then at least among the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and governing elites.³⁷ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Kalmyk delegations frequently travelled to Tibet to request the Dalai Lama's permission and blessings to construct new monasteries, and who was also granting monastic ordinations, and hundreds of Kalmyk monks were receiving monastic training in Tibet. However, as the Kalmyks became more dependent on Russia, the Russian government

³⁶ OR RNB: 590:146: 5: Внутренний строй ламайской общины у наших калмыков в течении первых 100-150 лет по перекочевки их в Россию оставался тот же, как в Зюнгарию.

³⁷ RGIA: 733: 42: 101: 21b-22a.

began to oppose these relations, hence, Kalmyk contacts with Tibet had begun to weaken. Thus, the growing power and influence of the Russian state had already begun to shift the focus of Kalmyk political deference away from Tibet prior the Kalmyk exodus from the Caspian steppes in 1771. Under these new circumstances, although the Kalmyks remained adherents of Buddhism, the clergy was increasingly educated and ordained locally, and the Lamas were chosen not by the Dalai Lama but by the people and local Kalmyk authorities themselves.³⁸

As is well known, the 1771 exodus had a devastating effect on the Kalmyks. The Kalmyks who fled the Caspian steppe perished in great numbers on their way to Dzungaria, and upon arrival were swiftly incorporated into the Qing Empire. The Kalmyks that remained behind lost a great deal of autonomy, as Catherine the Great's decree abolished the Kalmyk Khanate and incorporated Kalmyk lands into the Astrakhan Governorate. While having distinct implications for the Kalmyk political situation, some scholars argued that the 1771 exodus also severely weakened Buddhism. Already in the nineteenth century, Mongolist Alexander Popov (1838, 45-46) and Orthodox priest Parmen Smirnov ([1879]1999, 24-25) argued that most of the highly educated Buddhist monks had left and much of the Buddhist religious literature was taken along with them, following Ubashi khan. Bakaeva (2009, 12-13) and Kurapov (2016, 4) reasserted this argument, while Ulanov (2011, 70) went even further and claimed that the aftermath of 1771 exodus weakened the position of Buddhism and led to a resurgence of "pre-Buddhist beliefs". While one could, undoubtedly, agree that the number of Buddhist monasteries, monks and sacred artefacts, indeed, decreased following the 1771 exodus, it must also be said that relative to the remaining Kalmyk population the numbers must have sufficed to serve the spiritual needs of those remaining.

Following the 1771 Kalmyk exodus, Russian authorities became distrustful of the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*. Indeed, they suspected that the *sangha* played a great role in organizing and inciting the exodus (Kurapov 2016, 4-6; Palmov [1921]1992, 106). However, despite the government's distrust, the valid concern that the remaining Kalmyks would follow

³⁸ AV IVR RAN: 60: 1: 23: 3; OR RNB: 590: 146: 5b - 6b.

Ubashi khan as well as the Kalmyks' participation in the Pugachev rebellion (1772-1775), forced the government to be cautious in its dealings with the Kalmyks (Dordzhieva 2012, 62; Kurapov 2016, 5-6; Orlova 2007, 237). Furthermore, on June 17, 1773, Catherine the Great limited the power of the Orthodox Church, and promised "tolerance towards all faiths of Her Majesty".³⁹ The decree prohibited Orthodox priests from interfering in the affairs of non-Orthodox confessions and ordered the secular authorities to ensure peace and tolerance for all the faiths.⁴⁰ This decree further protected Kalmyk Buddhism from interference.

Following the abolishment of the Kalmyk Khanate and the Kalmyk incorporation into the Astrakhan Governorate, the Russian government continued to rely on co-opted local elites to deal with the Kalmyks. Despite the end of their political independence and the government's distrust towards the *sangha*, the latter was enlisted to assist in dealing with a still unruly Kalmyk aristocracy (Kurapov 2016, 5-7). Furthermore, in 1822 the government invited the Kalmyk aristocracy and the Buddhist *sangha* to contribute to review the Kalmyk code of laws which was meant to update them to suit the new socio-political reality.

In 1822 the Kalmyk nobility and the Buddhist *sangha* assembled at a place called Jinjil to bring the ancient Kalmyk laws "in accordance with the people's needs" (Leontovich 1880, 3). Contrary to the claims made by Pozdneev and Baddeley, the place Jinjil was a Kalmyk settlement situated in Russia's southwest near the Caspian Sea, and was not related to Jinjil, on the western frontier road near Kobdu going towards Tarbagatai, near the Oirat county (Krueger 1972, 196). According to Palmov ([1921]1992, 129) the Russian government directed its attention to the Kalmyk legal status because of the pleas from two Kalmyk noblemen: Baga-Derbet *taishi* Erdeni Tundutov and Khoshut *noyon* Serbedzhap Tumen. Their outstanding performance in the War of 1812 against Napoleon earned them respect and influence in St. Petersburg, a momentum that Tundutov and Tumen used to attempt to reinstate some degree of Kalmyk independence from the Astrakhan administration, especially in judicial matters (Erdniev [1970] 1985, 80); Palmov [1921]1992, 129). However,

³⁹ PSZ I, Vol. 19 (1773), No. 13996: 775-776.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the petitions were not the only reason for a review of the Kalmyk Code of laws. This review was part of a broader initiative by Alexander I to reform the state apparatus and codify the empire's legal system. The legal codes and administrative structures of the empire's various non-Russian peoples were also scrutinized. For instance, in 1822, Alexander I approved the statute "On Governing the *Inorodtsy* (those of other origins)" which established rights, regulations, and laws for Siberia's indigenous populations, including the Buriats (Raeff 1957, 271-278).⁴¹ The Jinjil Assembly sought to achieve similar objectives for the Kalmyks. However, disputes among the Kalmyk nobility and disagreements between Chief Inspector Kakhanov⁴² and Astrakhan Governor Ivan Popov (1776-1825) complicated the review process (Palmov [1921]1992, 131-148).

Chief Inspector Kakhanov was granted the authority to organize and supervise the Jinjil assembly. He himself noted that "when appointing me as Chief Inspector of the Kalmyk and Turkmen people, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave me the ancient Kalmyk Laws so I would invite the most esteemed *Noyons*, several Lamas and the *Zargo* Court to read it [the Kalmyk Laws] at this assembly, so they would fill in the shortcomings and modify the articles that needed to be changed because of the change in the nature of these people's governance".⁴³ To grant the reviewed laws a degree of legitimacy the authorities also required the participants of the assembly to sign the reviewed laws.⁴⁴ Furthermore, when gathering at Jinjil to discuss the laws, the Kalmyk *noyons*, lamas and members of the *zargo* court conducted a ritual for "the health and longevity of our Most Gracious Emperor, and of all His August Family, in accordance with our rituals, from our hearts, we donated several horses to the treasury [...]".⁴⁵ A joint letter written by the Kalmyk *noyons*, clergymen,

⁴¹ PSZ I, Vol. 38 (1822), No 29126: 394-317.

⁴² His name also appears to be spelled as Kokhanov in some archival documents

⁴³ NARK: I-1: 1: 188: 83a: По утверждению меня Главным Приставом Калмыцкого и Трухменского народов, Министерство Иностраных дел вручило мне древнее Калмыцкое уложение на тот предмет, дабы пригласить первейших Владельцев, нескольких Ламов и Суд Зарго, прочитать оное притом собрании, недостатки пополнить другие же статьи, коль с изменением рода управления тем народом, требуют тоже изменения, переменить [...].

⁴⁴ NARK: I-1: 1: 188: 83a; RGIA: 383: 29: 18: 2a-2b.

⁴⁵ NARK: I-1: 1: 188: 29b: за здравие и многолетие *Всемилостивейшего Государя нашего Императора, и всей Августейшей Его Фамилии, от усердия своего по нашему обряду пожертвовали в казну несколько лошадей [...].*"

members of the *zargo* court and *zaisangs* to Astrakhan Governor Ivan Ivanovich Popov argued that the ritual was conducted because the Kalmyks “felt grateful” for the attention of the central authority.⁴⁶

As noted by Ulanov, Badmaev and Holland (2017, 300), “throughout the evolution of the Kalmyk legal system Buddhism has played a key role in the development of secular law”. Indeed, similar to the Great Code of Laws and the *Toktols*, the Jinjil Code was based on a legal tradition and included extensive provisions regarding religious issues (Leontovich 1880, 167-170). The code legally solidified the status of the Buddhist *sangha*, and established the hierarchy of the Buddhist monastic order. It stipulated that “[...] The Lama is installed in the *uluses* of the *noyons* at the behest of the *noyon* and with ... society’s consent. In the absence of a Lama, a *bagshi* (abbot) shall take the Lama’s place; and where there is a lama in the *ulus*, the *bagshi* is the second in command. The *unzud* (usually a monk that begins the prayer) follows the *bagshi*. The *gebko* shall manage and oversee order in the *khurul* (monastery) and among the *sangha*” (Leontovich 1880,17-18).

Similar to the Great Code and the *Toktols*, the Jinjil Code also provided legal protection for the *sangha*. The law stipulated sanctions for dishonoring members of the *sangha*. The exact punishments vary depending on one’s position within the monastic hierarchy (Leontovich 1880, 15-16). According to the Code’s provisions the Kalmyk aristocracy would assume an even greater role in maintaining order in the monastic community. As such, each *noyon* had to know the exact location of the *sangha* and monasteries within his *ulus*, and had to ensure a stable number of monks that were present at all times through timely monastic appointments and promotions. Additionally, the permission of the *noyon*, family and community was required prior to entering the monastic order. This provision can be understood through the lens of economic necessity: by becoming a monk one would deprive a *noyon* of a tax-paying subject and would thus add to the burden resting upon one’s family and the community at large.

⁴⁶ Ibid.: чувствительными и благодарными [...].

The secular authorities were also to guard the mores of Buddhist monastic communities through a system of punishments and rewards. If a *gelong* violated one of the main Buddhist precepts, he was to be disrobed and fined. Plenty of attention was paid to punishments for alcohol consumption, which seems indicative of the fact that this may have been a problem among the monks (Leontovich 1880, 18-22). As argued by Ulanov, Badmaev and Holland (2017, 309), overall, the Jinjil Code strengthened penalties for alcohol consumption relative to what was stipulated in the *Toktols*.

Again, similar to the *Toktols*, the Jinjil Code also included provisions that regulated the religious conduct of the laity. As such, the law prohibited the killing of animals, demanded adherence to seven Mahayana precepts and intense prayer on designated fasting days (8th, 15th, and 30th days of the Lunar month) (Leontovich 1880, 88-89). Furthermore, the law also demanded from the nobility to teach their sons to read and write, and punished those who did not give their sons a proper education. Thus, the Kalmyk noblemen were committed to providing their sons a traditional education usually instructed by *gelongs* (Leontovich 1880, 22-23; Krueger 1972, 201).

As noted by Leontovich (1880, 169), the Jinjil assembly strove to “restore the purity of Buddhist rules for the life of Buddhist clergy” and “to elevate the Kalmyk clergy to the level of Buddhist ideals”. Indeed, the provisions and tone of the Jinjil Code distinctly illustrated that Kalmyk secular authorities were to serve as arbiters of the *sangha*’s purity. Yet, the Code also took into account the needs of Kalmyk “society” at large and the interests of the Russian government, by ensuring that *noyons* kept track of the *khuruls* and clergymen in their *uluses* and could make decisions regarding monastic ordinations and promotions, thus preventing an uncontrolled growth in the number of Buddhist monks. The Jinjil Code illustrated that even following the abolishment of the Kalmyk Khanate and Kalmyk incorporation into the Russian Empire, the Kalmyk aristocrats remained fervent supporters of Buddhism, and the synergy of “the political and the religious” continued to exist.

2.6. Kalmyk Buddhism: Monastic Organization and Religious Education

According to early nineteenth century Russian records, Buddhist monastics comprised one-tenth of the entire Kalmyk population, that is one cleric for every ten people. The Chief Inspector of the Kalmyk People, Nikolai Strakhov (1810, 17), cited a report submitted by the Kalmyk *noyons* in 1803, in which the total number of Buddhist monks was reported to be 1546. Though the accuracy of the report is hard to establish, the general size of the monastic community was corroborated by a member of the Imperial Economic Society, Ivan Rovinskii, who cited a similar number, 1707 (Karagodin 1987, 6-7). According to Strakhov's successor, Chief Inspector Smolin, in the 1820s there were 1257 monks for a total of 9997 Kalmyk yurts.⁴⁷ As mentioned above, although presented with these numbers, one, nevertheless, should approach them critically considering the enormous difficulties involved in conducting an accurate census among a nomadic people that move across a vast territory.

Due to tribal divisions and the relative independence of each *ulus* from another, Buddhist ecclesiastical structures remained rather loose. Mimicking the Kalmyk social divisions, the monasteries and prayer yurts belonged to one particular or several clans that supplied the monasteries with donations and new monks (Zhitetskii 1893, 50). Most of the Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries and prayer *yurts* were nomadic, however, by the end of the nineteenth century the number of sedentary monasteries had increased considerably. A nomadic monastery consisted of three types of yurts: (1) temple-yurts (*khurle ger*), (2) yurts of *sangha*, (3) and the yurts of commoners where poorer Kalmyks, herders and sometimes even *zaisangs* lived with their servants. The number of temple-yurts could vary greatly from *ulus* to *ulus* (Zhitetskii 1893, 43, 48-49).

Similar to other Buddhist Mongols, Kalmyks viewed having a monk in the family a blessing that “would rescue the family and household from misfortune in the current life and serve as an instrument for salvation in the afterlife” (Zhitetskii 1893, 55). Buddhist monks enjoyed great respect among the Kalmyks and the tradition of pledging one son to the monastery that began in the early seventeenth century continued to persist (Strakhov 1810,

⁴⁷ OR RNB: 590:146: 7a-7b

23). Contrary to the Buddhist monastic precepts, after entering the path of monkhood, Kalmyk *sangha* preserved ties with their families. A monk even retained the same inheritance rights as their non-monastic relatives.⁴⁸ Furthermore, similar to the situation in Tibet and Mongolia, Kalmyk Buddhist monks were not completely supported by the monastery, and thus they were often forced to rely on their families for subsistence, although in some cases monks from poor backgrounds were entitled to monastic subsidies for clothing and food.⁴⁹ As such, Aleksei Pozdnev pointed out the difference between the wealthy families who would buy a separate yurt for their children and their teachers to live in, present the teacher with gifts, and make large donations to the monasteries' *sangha* as a whole; and the poor Kalmyk families who struggled to provide basic food and clothing for their monk-relative.⁵⁰ However, there may very well have existed alternative patterns of kinship ties with monk-relatives. Indeed, in contrast to the usual pattern of family support to monk-relative, a letter from the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board (of which we will write more later) to the Kalmyk Administrative Council⁵¹ mentions that in some instances wealthy Buddhist monastics financially supported their lay family members.⁵²

Kinship also played an important role in matters of religious transfers. This meant that not unlike practices in Tibet, at times religious knowledge, posts and even artefacts or robes were passed on within one family line (Goldstein 2010, 5-6). Indeed, both Irodion Zhitetskii and Aleksei Pozdnev noted how the choice of a monk-mentor for a novice was determined by kinship or other informal relationships, and how it is possible to trace at least one family line in each monastery, where the monastic post together with the relevant property and possessions were passed on from generation to generation, from uncle to nephew (Zhitetskii 1893, 55).⁵³ It seems likely that these kinship ties together with economic disparity made it more challenging for the Kalmyks from a poor background to enter monkhood.

⁴⁸ NARK: I-42: 1: 4: 7a-8b.

⁴⁹ AV IVR RAN: 60: 1: 5: 14b.

⁵⁰ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 64: 28b.

⁵¹ An imperial body that governed the Kalmyk affairs between 1836 and 1848.

⁵² NARK: I-42: 1: 4: 8.

⁵³ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 64: 28b.

The monks were exempt from any duties and lived off donations from the laity and the income generated by the livestock they possessed.⁵⁴ Many monasteries and individual monks accumulated a large estate and great wealth, including monastic serfs – called *shabi*, *shabiner* or *shevner* (Strakhov 1810, 25).⁵⁵ That being said, monasteries also played a role in the provision of certain social services and redistributed some of their wealth to the poorer strata of Kalmyks.⁵⁶ Indeed, as noted by missionary Parmen Smirnov “elderly, blind, limping, sick and in general people who are incapable of work must nomadize near their clan’s *khuruls* from which they receive support” ([1879]1999, 65). Additionally, Buddhist monks also supplied the only medical services available at the time.

The Kalmyks as well as other Oirats did not have the institution of *khubilgan* (reincarnates). The Kalmyk *sangha* was instead called *khuvarakh*. The Kalmyk ecclesiastical hierarchy comprised three levels: *manzhi*⁵⁷, *getsul*⁵⁸ and *gelong*⁵⁹, and promotion from one level to the other depended on the success in one’s own studies (Strakhov 1810, 24). Due to the geographical remoteness and lack of contacts with other Buddhist centers Kalmyk religious education differed from Tibet, Mongolia, and even Buriatia. Buddhist knowledge was passed on through oral traditions and the sources and texts from the yearly pilgrimages that were preserved for hundreds of years (Spasskii 1894, 10).⁶⁰ Kalmyk Buddhism lacked a clearly defined and centralized system of monastic education, and every monastery was in charge of bringing up the next generation of monks on its own. The household of each *gelong* is akin to a small school with one to five students (L’vovskii 1893, 25). Typically, Kalmyks would begin their monastic education between the ages of eight and twelve. After entering the monastery, a Kalmyk boy was assigned to one of the *gelongs*, under whose supervision he was to receive his education (Nebol’sin 1852, 91; Zhitetskii 1893, 50-51). A novice’s

⁵⁴ OR RNB: 590:146: 9.

⁵⁵ The Russian government would abolish the institution of *shabiner* in the 1830s. An episode in Kalmyk history which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

⁵⁶ NARK: I-42: 1: 7: 12, 14.

⁵⁷ Also transcribed as *mandzhi*: a novice who follows 5 precepts.

⁵⁸ A second level of monastic ordination, not yet a fully ordained monk who follows 36 precepts.

⁵⁹ Also transcribed as *gelung* or *geliung*: a fully ordained monk over twenty-five years of age, who keeps to no fewer than 253 precepts.

⁶⁰ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 37b.

education was divided into two stages: a general and a specialized. During the first, general stage, the boy would learn Tibetan, Clear Script (*Toodo Bichig*), prayers, musical instruments, and ceremonial and monastic rules, as well as participate in religious services and rituals. The second, specialized stage, began a few years later, and allowed the novice to specialize in philosophy in order to become a *bagshi* – a teacher of philosophy, *zurhachi* – an astrologist, *emchi* – a medical specialist, or *zarachi* – a painter (Spasskii 1894, 6-8; Zhitetskii 1893, 50-52). The education process could take anywhere between eighteen to twenty years. In general, it took five years to promote from *manzhi* to *getsul*, and another eight years from *getsul* to *gelong*; after this the monks could specialize over a diverging number of years (Schorkowitz 2001a, 203). There was no set time for graduation, and the time it would take to finish one's religious education could vary greatly from student to student.

In addition to religious education, Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries also offered general education. In fact, as we saw earlier, according to the Jinjil Code, Kalmyk aristocratic families could be fined if their sons were not proficient in *Toodo Bichig* (Leontovich 1880, 75-76). The sons of the Kalmyk laity could attend the monasteries to learn Clear Script, history and arithmetic (Spasskii 1894, 3).⁶¹ The Kalmyks who attended Buddhist monasteries solely for the purpose of general education would study together with those who intended to pursue a monastic career; however, the former left the monastery soon after acquiring basic education (Spasskii 1894, 7).

Unlike among the Buriats and other Mongols, the Kalmyks did not use the term *lama* to refer to just any member of the *sangha*, but reserved this term for the esteemed members of the *sangha*. According to Aleksei Pozdneev, in the eyes of commoners, Lamas were even more important and esteemed figures than noblemen or even khans.⁶² Contemporary research suggests that the local supreme religious leader among the Kalmyks who had influence over the whole Buddhist *sangha* was a Lama, appointed directly from Tibet (Kitinov 2016, 33; Kurapov 2007, 73). According to the observations of Peter Simon Pallas (1773, 515-

⁶¹ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 64: 27-27; AV IVR RAN: 60: 1: 5: 20a-21a; b.

⁶² OR RNB: 590:146: 6.

516) “there was always one Lama who is a viceroy of the Dalai Lama among the Torgut Kalmyks. And for this post they always send a noble and famous clergyman [...]” However, at the same time, contrary to the studies mentioned above, some sources also mention the existence of other highly esteemed lamas. The *Toktols* that were developed sometime between 1741 and 1753 mentioned at least two Lamas: Lama Baldan-Gabtsu and Lama Lonric-Tsordzhi. Pallas (1773, 515-516), who travelled through the Kalmyk Khanate in 1769, made mention of a Lama from the Dzunggar *uluses* who arrived to join the other Kalmyks in the Caspian steppes in the eighteenth century. Georgi (1799, 19-20) even noted that each *taishi* had his own Lama in his *ulus*.

After the exodus of 1771, when official contacts between the Kalmyks and Tibet completely shut down, Lamas were chosen by the Kalmyk *sangha* from a pool of *gelongs*, and confirmed by the Russian authorities (Bergmann 1804, 82; Nefed’ev 1834, 98). Nevertheless, at this point in time, the sources mention more than one Lama. In 1809 when assessing the situation in Astrakhan governorate, Ivan Rovinskii (1809, 180) recorded four Lamas: two in the Torgut, one in the Derbet and one in the Khoshut *uluses*. In the 1820s Pozdneev, citing Chief Inspector Smolin, too, mentions four Lamas.⁶³ Furthermore, there lived at least one Lama among the Don Kalmyks – the earliest records mentioning this Lama’s existence, according to Arash Bormanshinov (1991, 3-7), date back to 1806.

Although enjoying a great deal of respect, Lama’s did not have any influence outside the jurisdiction of their own *ulus*. After all, the Kalmyk tribal divisions assumed that *uluses* were independent from each other. Hence, even if one of the Lamas was appointed directly by the Dalai Lama and enjoyed a greater degree of respect in that sense, the extent to which this particular Lama had an influence in other *uluses* or over the Kalmyk *sangha* in its entirety as a type of head of the *sangha* in general, remains questionable. Therefore, it is difficult to make comparisons between these traditional, pre-existing structure and the office of the Lama of the Kalmyk People instituted in 1834 by the Ministry of Interior.

⁶³ Ibid.: 7a-7b.

2.7. The 1825 Regulations on the Governance of the Kalmyk People

After discussing the complex process of the Kalmyk's incorporation in the Russian Empire and their continuing adherence to Tibetan Buddhism, in 1825 we take note of a fundamental new approach by the government, when the authorities issued for the first a new and substantial legislation attempting to codify the structure of Kalmyk governing bodies and their functions.

In 1825 “the Regulations for the Governance of the Kalmyk People” (*Pravila dlia Upravleniia Kalmytского Naroda*) illustrated that the Russian imperial government aimed to increase the “legibility” of the Kalmyk people. Kalmyk affairs were now transferred from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the purview of the Ministry of Interior. This emphasized the new status of the Kalmyks as an internal matter of the Russian Empire. Furthermore, the 1825 Regulations established the Kalmyk Affairs Commission (*Komissiiia Kalmytskikh Del*) (1825-1836) – the principal body in charge of all Kalmyk matters. In addition to members from the Russian administration – the Chief Inspector of the Kalmyk People, the Astrakhan Civil Governor, and the Astrakhan Governorate's Prosecutor – the Commission also included two Kalmyk representatives – one *noyon* and one Lama. The Commission was charged with the task of reviewing traditional Kalmyk laws and to modify them to better suit the Russian imperial legal framework. The Kalmyk *noyons* and representatives from the clergy were to provide assistance and advice in this legal review process. Additionally, the Commission was to conduct a Kalmyk census, and to gather and present information on power and social relations within the Kalmyk society, including the degree of the *sangha's* influence on the Kalmyks as well as the *sangha's* responsibilities.⁶⁴

The Regulations stated that the *zargo* court was to settle certain civic, familial and religious cases and it was stipulated that all cases were to be “resolved in accordance with ancient Kalmyk Code of Laws, customs, and rituals”.⁶⁵ The court included eight members: two

⁶⁴ PSZ I, Vol. 40 (1825), No. 30290: 155-158:

⁶⁵ Ibid.: 161: решаются по древнему Калмыцкому Уложению, обычаям и обрядам.

gelongs, who were allowed to participate exclusively in the adjudication of religious, marital and family disputes; and one nobleman-representative from each of the six *uluses* (Iki-Derbet, Baga-Derbet, Torgut, Khoshut, Baga-Tsokhur and Erketen).⁶⁶ These representatives were to be selected by the *uluses* and confirmed by the Commission for a three-year term.⁶⁷

Although the 1825 Regulations preserved certain elements of Kalmyk self-governance, there was little room for any degree of Kalmyk “independence”. Indeed, the Kalmyk Affairs Commission was to supervise the work of the *zargo*, to maintain order, and to supervise the collection of taxes and ensure that everybody carried out his duties as requested. *Ulus* inspectors were to reside in each of the Kalmyk *uluses*. These *ulus* inspectors, although they were specifically instructed not to interfere in the internal governing of the Kalmyk *uluses*, were tasked with carrying out “Policing responsibilities”, and to report violations and demand action be taken accordingly by *noyons* or *ulus* governors.⁶⁸

Additionally, although the Kalmyk Affairs Commission included two Kalmyk representatives, the Astrakhan Governor would cast the deciding vote when opinions were split.⁶⁹ In fact, part II paragraph 9 of the Regulations clearly stated the purpose of the Kalmyk Affairs Commission, which was: “through gradual changes to incorporate Kalmyks into the general structure of Civic governance”.⁷⁰ That being said, the existing state bureaucratic apparatus was not yet capable of achieving this ultimate goal. This is one of the reasons why the 1825 Regulations also emphasized the need for information gathering regarding the internal social structure of Kalmyk society.⁷¹

Following the introduction of the 1825 Regulations, the regional administration was to make the Kalmyk communities more legible by bringing Kalmyk governance in line with these new instructions. While it was distinctly stipulated who was to represent Kalmyk

⁶⁶ Ibid.: 159.

⁶⁷ Ibid.: 155-159.

⁶⁸ Ibid.: 159-160: обязанность Полицейская.

⁶⁹ Ibid.: 157.

⁷⁰ Ibid.: 156: введения Калмыков постепенным [пре]образованием в состав общего Гражданского управления.

⁷¹ Ibid.: 156-158.

interests in the Kalmyk Affairs Commission, the Regulations did not determine the details of this arrangement. The Chief Inspector even had to ask Astrakhan Governor Aleksei Ermolov to clarify (1) the term of post held by a Kalmyk representative and whether his presence in the Commission was required at all times, (2) the amount of the Lama's allowance and the size of his escort, which was usually between fifty and one-hundred-fifty clergymen, (3) how to select the Lama, as there were only three of them in all Kalmyk *uluses*, (4) and who fills the Lama's position in his *ulus* in his absence.⁷²

While I was unable to find the documents that contained the exact answers to the Chief Inspector's questions, according to the available archival material, in January 1826 Kalmyk *noyons*, *zaisangs* and the *sangha* were ordered to come to Astrakhan to select representatives for the Kalmyk Affairs Commission. The Chief Inspector read them the 1825 Regulations along with a translation in Kalmyk. The selection of representatives from among the nobility went rather smoothly – Baga-Derbet *noyon* Dzhambo Tundutov was elected from among the five candidates.⁷³

The selection of the Lama, however, ran into some obstacles. At the time of the Lama's selection, there were only two Lamas among the Kalmyks, both over the age of eighty, which made them rather too old and frail to hold the post. The Kalmyk representatives asked the Chief Inspector for permission to hold a meeting to discuss the issue. On January 13, 1826, following a three-day meeting, the Kalmyk noblemen and clergymen (each *ulus* sent five clergymen) selected Lama Genin Chembel (Simbel or Chimbel) of Baga-Tsokhur *ulus*, as "the most worthy and respected clergyman" to hold the post of Lama for three years.⁷⁴

Lama Genin Chembel's selection, however, revealed the difficulties in applying the empire's laws and regulations. As already mentioned, traditionally the Lama's authority only spread within his own *ulus*, and therefore selecting one Lama to represent the interests of the dispersed Kalmyk population was rather problematic. Indeed, Lama Genin Chembel's

⁷² NARK: I-1: 1: 236: 6a-7a.

⁷³ *Ibid.*: 43a-43b.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 43b-45b.

selection caused a row among some members of the aristocracy and some of the *sangha*. *Bagshi* Arshi from the *ulus* of *noyon* Tumen announced that he could not accept this Lama and would not bow to him. Both *noyon* Tumen and *bagshi* Arshi left the meeting before it ended.⁷⁵ *Gelongs* Zodbo and Churum from Iki *Khurul* of the Shabiner clan of the Derbet *noyon* Dzhambo also disagreed with the appointment of Lama Chembel. The two *gelongs* provided three reasons why Lama Genin Chembel was not an appropriate candidate: (1) there was a pre-existing quarrel between their *noyon* Zhambo *taishi* and *noyon* Erdeni Tsagan Kichikov to whose *ulus* Lama Chembel belongs, (2) Lama Chembel is younger than their *bagshi* and not “as capable in the sciences”, and, finally, (3) at the Jinjil meeting in 1822, Lama Chembel had spoken out against the Russian authorities.⁷⁶ The Russian government disregarded the Kalmyk complaints and Lama Genin Chembel was officially approved as the Lama who represented the *sangha* in the Kalmyk Affairs Commission. As Bakaeva (2020) states, while it is unclear who held the post from 1825 to 1836, it seems that Lama Genin Chembel’s selection as the Buddhist representative on the Kalmyk Affairs Commission, as well as the discussions surrounding his appointment, were, up until today relatively unknown to the wider academic community.

In 1828 Tsar Nicholas I reconfirmed the rights granted to the Kalmyks by previous emperors. The document in which he did so also reconfirmed the existence of the *zargo* court chaired by one of the Kalmyk *noyons*. But most importantly, the document stipulated that the Kalmyk *sangha* was allowed to “freely perform rituals of Lamaist teaching”, however, requested that all the Kalmyks, including the Buddhist monks abided by the state’s laws.⁷⁷

It took the government almost ten years to conduct its comprehensive research and formulate a more detailed legislation for governing the Kalmyk people. The reign of Emperor Nicholas I was marked by an increasing tendency towards centralization of power and tightening of administrative control over the empire’s population. The 1834 Provision “On the Governance of the Kalmyk People” (*Polozhenie ob Upravlenii Kalmytskim Narodom*)

⁷⁵ Ibid.: 45b.

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 48a-48b: не так способный в науках.

⁷⁷ PSZ II, Vol. 3 (1828), No. 1976: 456-457: свободное отправление обрядов Ламайского закона.

introduced the system of “curatorship” (*popechitel'stvo*) as one of the many instruments of state control over the Kalmyks that would continue to exist until the end of the empire.

The Chief Curator (*popechitel'*) of the Kalmyk people would become the permanent representative of the Russian administration in the Kalmyk *uluses*. The curator was to oversee the Kalmyks in all affairs and needs. He answered to the Astrakhan Military Governor, and his numerous functions ranged from overseeing Kalmyk compliance with Russian imperial laws, to ensuring that the Kalmyks do not indulge in alcohol consumption and debauchery.⁷⁸

More importantly for our research, the year 1834 marked the incorporation of Kalmyk Buddhism in Russia's multi-confessional administration. The 1834 legislation included provisions aimed at defining and regulating Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. It established the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board (Kalmyk: *Blamiyin Shacini Zarga*; Russian: *Lamaiskoe Dukhovnoe Pravlenie*) as the main judicial and governing body for Kalmyk Buddhist affairs.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth description of how the Oirat-Kalmyks entered the Caspian steppes, and how they gradually became subjects of the Russian Empire. Contrary to many Muscovite records and much of the extant research, the road towards Russian subjecthood took almost one and a half centuries, and ended in 1771, when Ubashi khan took the majority of his people back to Dzungaria, and Catherine the Great incorporated the remaining Kalmyk population into the Astrakhan Governorate. Additionally, we examined the spread of Buddhism among the Mongols in general, and the Oirats more specifically. The Oirat-Mongol political authorities and Buddhist *sangha* had a symbiotic relationship. The political authorities played the role of patron of Buddhism providing the Buddhist *sangha* with an environment conducive to the spread of their faith, while at the same time functioning as arbiters of the *sangha's* mores. The *sangha*, for their part, provided Mongol

⁷⁸ PSZ II, Vol. 10 (1835), No. 7560a: 23.

secular rulers with legitimacy, bestowing titles on them, thus providing a justification for the subjugation of their people.

The notion of synergy between secular and religious power continued to inform the relations between the Kalmyk aristocracy and Buddhist monastic community even after their migration to the Caspian steppes and throughout their subsequent gradual subjugation under the Russian imperial rule. The legal codes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries indicated that the Kalmyk aristocracy remained fervent supporters of Buddhism for a variety of reasons. The *sangha* continued to enjoy their legally protected status, and the Kalmyk aristocracy were the protectors of the *sangha's* status.

Furthermore, the 1825 Regulations for the Governance of the Kalmyk People, the first law that attempted to codify the Kalmyk governing structure, reserved a place for a Lama as one of the two representatives of the Kalmyk people in the newly established Kalmyk Affairs Commission. Although the Russian government required educated individuals with knowledge of the law to provide expertise for the Commission's legal review, the Lama's involvement also helped legitimize the Kalmyk Affairs Commission and its actions in the eyes of the Kalmyks. In this way, the Russian government, to some extent, upheld the traditional synergy between political and religious authorities.

As far as the road to Russian subjecthood is concerned, we can distill two elements that can inform our understanding of the developments after 1825. Both elements concern the way in which the central government tried to bring the Kalmyks into its sphere of influence. First of all, the concentration of power into the hands of one or a few powerful figures rather than decentralized *uluses* and tribes which were harder to control. The Russian efforts at appointing a Kalmyk viceroy from among the powerful *taishis*; and the installation of inspectors and curators for the Kalmyk people are clear examples of this. This tendency is also reflected in later policies regarding the abandonment of the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board as a collegial body in favor for a single Lama of the Kalmyk People.

Secondly, appeasement and accommodation mixed with interference and political intrigue, would become hallmarks of the Empire's approach to Kalmyk incorporation. The

appeasement of the Kalmyk nobility was a strategy chosen in no small part due to the limitations of Russian military capabilities in the south, along with the understanding that the Kalmyk cavalry would be less costly to cajole into doing battle, than to enlist outright. At the same time increasing encroachment upon roaming pastures, left many Kalmyk *uluses* on a path to deject poverty and general decline. Furthermore, the government's reliance on the use of written agreements such as oaths of allegiance and legislation was typical for their approach to bring the Kalmyks and the *sangha* under close control.

This last element specifically would come to the fore in the decennia following 1825, as the Russian administration resolved to establish institutions which would suit its approach managing diversity by building a confessional state and creating multiconfessional establishment.

Chapter 3. Managing Diversity: A “Church” for Buddhism

This chapter examines how the Russian government sought to increase the legibility of Kalmyk Buddhism and its *sangha* and how the government’s interventions became significantly more structural and legal in nature. Indeed, from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, Russia’s system of governing largely relied on religion to classify and exercise effective control over a diverse population. The government conceived a series of legislative initiatives and institutions for the purpose of managing and controlling various religious communities.

Examining the government’s approach towards religion, I specifically focus on the period following the Peter the Great, when religion and religious bodies, predominantly the Orthodox Church, but also non-Orthodox religious institutions and clergy were incorporated into the state’s administrative and legal systems and were increasingly used to serve the state’s interests. At the end of the eighteenth and in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian government enacted laws, established institutions and set up agencies for the management of the empire’s so-called “foreign confessions”. In the case of Kalmyk Buddhism this legislation and institution-building was conceived in two stages. Indeed, the 1834 and 1847 Provisions on the Governance of the Kalmyk People incorporated Kalmyk Buddhism into the empire’s administrative and legal systems. Both provisions granted Kalmyk Buddhism official legal recognition as one of Russia’s “tolerated” religions, and designed laws, principles and institutions for governing Kalmyk Buddhism throughout the Romanovs’ rule until 1917.

This chapter analyses the 1834 and 1847 Provisions on the Governance of the Kalmyk People that concerned Buddhism, yet also examines the implementation and workings of the 1834 and 1847 Provisions. More specifically, the chapter explores the foundation of the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board (LSGB) (Kalmyk: *Blamiyin Shacini Zarga*; Russian: *Lamaistskoe Dukhovnoe Pravlenie*), the establishment of the office of the Lama of the Kalmyk People (Kalmyk: *Halimag Tagchin Blama*, Russian: *Lama Kalmytskogo Naroda*), and the introduction of the legal staff quotas (*shtat*) for Buddhist monasteries and monks.

As this chapter will show, the institutionalization of Kalmyk Buddhism looked solid on paper, yet discrepancies between law and reality were commonplace. In large part, due to poor communication between the different bureaucratic levels of the empire and the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha's* incomppliance, this meant there was to be significant deviation from the adopted provisions.

3.1. Russia's Multiconfessional Establishment

As was already mentioned in the introduction, similar to many other multinational and multiconfessional empires, the Russian Empire, too, faced the challenge of legibility. Starting in the eighteenth century, the Russian government began to rely on a religion-centered framework to manage its diverse subjects. This religion-centered framework assumed that the empire adhered to the principle of religious tolerance and allowed the existence of various religious communities within the Russian state. At the same time, in order to increase legibility of its diverse subjects, the government established various religious institutions and legislations, thus instrumentalizing religion to better control the population. This development was preceded by a model of church-state symbiosis in the Muscovite era. This section explores the Tsarist and imperial governments' approaches towards religion.

Prior to the eighteenth century, the traditional Muscovite political model encompassed the idea of a symbiosis between church and state. Russia's autocrats were always considered as part of the framework of the Orthodox ecclesiastical establishment. The legitimacy of the autocrat's rule was based on the myth of the divine nature of his authority and the claims to be the successor of Roman-Byzantine emperors with "Moscow as the Third Rome". The Tsar was not only the secular ruler but also a religious leader who had a specific function in rituals. The Church, in the form of the Patriarch and other hierarchs, actively participated in various aspects of social and political life, including births, marriages and coronations. Furthermore, the Church assumed the legislative initiative in both ecclesiastical

and secular matters, which in their legal standing did not differ from the decrees issued by the Tsar (Raeff 1984, 2-3).

In 1721 Peter the Great disrupted this traditional Muscovite model by introducing the Most Holy Synod, which was a collegial body of clerics headed by a lay official – the Chief Procurator. The influence of these clerics was fairly limited as the Chief Procurator was the one who advised the emperor on which clerics should be invited to participate in the Most Holy Synod (Waldron 1987, 105). Gregory Freeze (2007, 212) argued that Tsar Peter’s Church reform did not aim at transforming the Orthodox Church into a “department of the state”, but at making the Church into a distinct and efficient organization that could supervise and regulate religious life. In order to improve the Orthodox Church’s functioning, it underwent four main transformations: synodization, professionalization, specialization, and bureaucratization. Synodization meant a new level of ecclesiastic centralization: a change from remote authority to an active overseer of the diocesan administration across the Empire. Professionalization referred to a substantial improvement in clerical education and training, which became a primal point in determining ecclesiastical careers. Specialization meant that while ecclesiastical authority was excluded from secular matters, it was reaffirmed over religious issues. And finally, bureaucratization meant that the Church gradually embraced the techniques and processes of state administration, from paperwork to the routines of office work (Freeze 2007, 212-214). Many points of the Church reform, and particularly synodization, specialization and bureaucratization will resurface in our examination of the government’s making of church-like structures for Kalmyk Buddhism.

Under this new system, the Orthodox church retained substantial authority over the spiritual domain, but lost some of its authority over secular matters. Religion started, increasingly, to be regarded in instrumental terms. The ecclesiastical establishment became a disciplining agent of society. As such religious institutions were entrusted new tasks including public welfare and public education. From that point onward, state interests were said to have priority in policy-making. To quote Raeff (1983, 197): “... spiritual and religious affairs were taken into account only if and when they had a direct bearing on state interest”.

These institutional and legal arrangements provided a model for the state's subsequent efforts to manage Russia's non-Orthodox religions that began during the reign of Catherine the Great.

Influenced by the Cameralists' thoughts, Empress Catherine the Great also recognized the utility of religion for order, stability and welfare of her domain (Crews 2006, 40). With this in mind, Catherine the Great further restrained the power of the Orthodox Church, and proclaimed the Edict of Religious Tolerance in 1773.⁷⁹ Aside from the ideas of the Enlightenment, Catherine's policies of religious tolerance were guided by the pragmatic needs of managing her growing and increasingly heterogeneous empire. The acquisition of new territories through the First Partition of Poland (1772) gave rise to the question of state control of Roman and Greek Catholics. The problem of so-called religious "dissent" (Lutherans and Orthodox) that Catherine the Great had, up until then, used as an excuse to interfere in Poland's internal affairs made the empress realize the dangers of religious diversity to her own dominion. More specifically it encouraged her to minimize papal influence over her new subjects. Further afield in Bashkortostan and Urals the uprisings of 1755 and 1773-1775, in part triggered by the proselytizing activities of the Orthodox Church, made some Russian officials realize that the accommodation of Islam was crucial. It was to be a chain of events, which occurred almost simultaneously in different parts of the empire, that fostered the state's institution building for non-Orthodox faiths (Werth 2014, 49). The subsequent reforms made by the administrations under Catherine the Great (1762-1796), Paul I (1796-1801), Alexander I (1801-1825) and Nicholas I (1825-1855) would form imperial Russia's administrative and legal systems to manage its foreign confessions.

The first movement towards this new form of governance would be the installation of a distinct state-supervised religious administration for Catholics and Muslims at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1788 an imperial decree founded the Ufa Ecclesiastical Assembly of the Muhammadan Creed, the goal of which was to regulate the religious life of the empire's Muslim population (Crews 2006, 52-55). Meanwhile, the Catholic Church, whose number of

⁷⁹ PSZ I, Vol. 19 (1773), No. 13996: 775-776.

followers in the empire drastically increased with the Partition of Poland in 1722, was subjected to central control through the Baltic College of Justice (Thaden 1984, 45-46; Zatko 1965, 305-306). The Jewish population of the annexed Polish territories were allowed to retain all of the rights they held before the partition (Hellman 2013, 103). At the same time “schism” from Orthodoxy was considered illegitimate, therefore Russia’s tolerance did not apply to the Uniate church whose members were pressured into converting to Orthodoxy (Skinner 2005, 24-25; Wolff 2002, 160-162).

Administrative reforms in the early nineteenth century generated new prospects for bringing non-Orthodox religions under centralized control. In 1810 Russia saw the establishment of the Chief Directorate for the Spiritual Affairs of the Foreign Confessions (*Glavnoe Upravlenie Dukhovnykh Del Inostrannykh Ispovedanii*)⁸⁰, that in 1832 was renamed into the Department of the Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions (*Departament Dukhovnykh Del Inostrannykh Ispovedanii*)⁸¹ and incorporated in the main administrative body for maintaining domestic order – the Ministry of Interior (Luk’ianov 2009, 109). Although the Department of Foreign Confessions comprised separate departments for managing the religious affairs of Catholics, Lutheran, Armenian-Gregorian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist and Pagan faiths, the affairs of Christian creeds would remain its primary business throughout its history (Werth 2014, 55). Nonetheless, it supervised the recognized non-Orthodox clergy of both Christian and non-Christian religions, thus being an instrument for maintaining state control over the Empire’s many foreign faiths (Luk’ianov 2009, 24-25). However, it is important to note that the authority of the Department of Foreign Confessions never encompassed all areas with foreign confessions: it never reached Finland and Central Asia, and lost its jurisdiction over the Caucasus in 1856.

The reign of Nicholas I was shaped by the shock of the 1825 Decembrist revolt and the 1830-1831 Polish uprising, as well as the revolutions in Europe. The emperor’s principal goal was to maintain and preserve Russian autocracy by sheltering it from the “evils” of liberalism

⁸⁰ PSZ I, Vol. 31, (1810), No 24307: 279-80.

⁸¹ From here onwards I refer to this department as the Department of Foreign Confessions.

and nationalism (Kappeler [1992]2001, 248). Among his measures to that effect was the introduction of Russian laws, administration and institutions in different parts of Russia in order to centralize and standardize bureaucratic control (Kappeler [1992]2001, 249-250). Under Tsar Nicholas I the government introduced more restrictive policies towards the Jews (Klier 2001, 97-99) and Catholics (Kappeler [1992]2001, 250), and “united” the Uniates with the Russian Orthodox Church (Weeks 2001, 74-76).

Despite the infringement on certain rights of the non-Orthodox population, some historians argue that Nicholas I’s policies merely aimed to reinforce the legitimacy of the rule of the Russian autocrat among the non-Orthodox minorities and was meant to further their integration into the administrative apparatus, yet did not intend to culturally russify them (Kappeler [1992]2001, 250; Werth 2007, 176; Tolz 2006, 307). However, as noted by Schorkowitz, although Russification in its cultural aspects remained superficial in nature, Nicholas I’s reign did herald an age of increased conservatism and government support for Orthodox missionary activities (2001a, 173). Indeed, after all, one of the most influential figures during the reign of Nicholas I, Minister of Education Sergei Uvarov, emphasized the regime’s duty to protect “national religion” and “dominant Church” through the famous three pillars “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality” (Zorin 2001, 59-63).

Nicholas I’s goal to centralize and unify the government’s control over the empire’s population brought about a series of new governmental institutions, rules and legislations, including those concerning Russia’s foreign faiths. Although the Directorate for Spiritual Affairs began to develop legislation and statutes for the different “foreign confessions” in the late 1820s, it was delayed by the Napoleonic war (1803-1815), ministerial chaos, and the accession to the throne of Nicholas I (1825). Despite the delay, the results of the work of the Chief Directorate can be seen in a series of legislations for different “foreign confessions” promulgated throughout the 1830s. In 1831 the legislations for the Tauride Muslim clergy in Crimea were issued, in 1832 a Charter for the Lutherans, and before introducing the laws on Jewish religious affairs in 1835 and Armenian religious affairs in 1836 – we find the 1834 Provision for Governance of the Kalmyk People (Werth 2014, 58-59).

3.2. Institution-Building: The 1834 Provision and the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board

Having discussed Russia's general approach towards religion and “foreign confessions”, I shall now delve into the imperial government’s legislative initiatives and institution-building with regards to Kalmyk Buddhism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 1825 Regulations established the Kalmyk Affairs Commission in order to make preparations for the Kalmyk’s incorporation into “the general structure of Civic governance”.⁸² While the Kalmyk Affairs Commission was largely charged with collecting information about the Kalmyks, in 1827 Tsar Nicholas I also dispatched to the Kalmyk steppe senator Fedor Ivanovich Engel. This high official was ordered to review the socio-political situation and to suggest any measures necessary to create peace and justice; and to improve economic life.⁸³ Discovering a close connection between religious and secular Kalmyk elites, Engel came to the conclusion that controlling the Buddhist *sangha*’s activities was in the interest of the Russian state.⁸⁴ In other words, Kalmyk Buddhist clergy’s position and status among the Kalmyks made it essential to make the *sangha* legible.

After several years of preparation, in 1834 the government introduced the 1834 Provision for the Governance of the Kalmyk People⁸⁵ that legally determined the rights and duties of the Kalmyk population of the Astrakhan Governorate. The 1834 Provision also contained a set of instructions regulating Kalmyk Buddhism. This was to be the first comprehensive set of norms and rules that determined the place of Kalmyk Buddhism in Russia’s administrative and legal systems.

Article 7 of the 1834 Provision founded the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board⁸⁶. The LSGB became part of the civil administration, where the Kalmyk Buddhist affairs were to be

⁸² PSZ II, Vol. 40 (1825), No 30290: 156: в состав общего Гражданского управления.

⁸³ GAAO: 2: 2: 23: 22a-40a.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 18-39.

⁸⁶ Ibid.: 27-28

resolved under the supervision of Russian secular authorities and with their consent. As in the case of the Muslim clergy argued by Crews (2006) and Campbell (2005), the enormous influence of the Buddhist *sangha* over the Kalmyk population made the authorities eager to tie this category of people to the state by instituting a legal definition of its position. The LSGB answered to the Astrakhan Military Governor and the Ministry of Interior, and as all other administrative bodies governing the Kalmyk people, the LSGB was ordered to assemble in Astrakhan, in direct proximity to their Russian supervisors.⁸⁷ Overall, both the establishment of the LSGB and the choice of place for its assembly illustrated the government's goal of creating a more standardized and centralized administration. Drawing on the models of the Orthodox Church and the empire's Islamic institutions, the state officials envisioned a domestic organizational structure for Buddhism that would imbue imperial policy with religious authority. At the same time the LSGB served as an advisory body to the Astrakhan Governor and the Kalmyk Administrative Council (Rus: *Sovet Kalmytskogo Upravleniia*) – an agency for the Kalmyk affairs that replaced the Kalmyk Affairs Commission – on questions of how to reform Buddhist institutions in order to better integrate and connect them with the imperial administration. In addition to the obvious political benefits, the reform of the Kalmyk Buddhist institutions and reduction of the number of Kalmyk Buddhist monks could increase the state's tax revenues, as the *sangha*, unlike Kalmyk commoners, were tax exempt.

Following the example of the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly (e.g. Campbell 2005; Crews 2006), the LSGB was a collegial administrative body, which included four Buddhist monks under the chairmanship of a Lama. The office of the Lama was an appointed life-long post of Buddhist leadership, as opposed to the institutions of the Dalai Lama in Tibet and the Jebdzundamba Khutugtu⁸⁸ in Mongolia, which are passed on through reincarnation. The Russian authorities reserved the right to appoint the Lama: according to the 1834 Provision the Lama was to be selected by the Astrakhan Governor and subsequently confirmed by the Minister of Interior and a Highest Decree. Article 1 provision 13 stated the

⁸⁷ Ibid.: 22.

⁸⁸ Jebdzundamba Khutugtu is a title given to the top-ranked lama in Mongolia. More on Jebdzundamba Khutugtu see Byambaa 2006; Bareja-Starzyńska 2009.

following regarding the Lama's selection: "in the case of vacancies [...] the Astrakhan Military Governor [...] chooses according to his own considerations [...] a reliable clergyman [...], and presents [this clergyman's name] to the Ministry of Interior".⁸⁹

The other members of the LSGB were elected in a meeting of all *bagshi* and *gelongs* for a three-year-term, yet, they had to be confirmed by the Astrakhan Military Governor. The age threshold for members of the LSGB was twenty-five, and a criminal record was a disqualifying factor. The loyalty of the members of the LSGB to the empire was to be ensured by an oath to the sovereign in accordance with Buddhist precepts.⁹⁰ Another tool of ensuring the LSGB's loyalty was monetary rewards. The members of the LSGB benefited particularly from government incentives and rewards. The annual salary of the presiding Lama was 2500 rubles, other LSGB members received 700 rubles. In comparison, the highest imperial official and the permanent representative of the imperial administration in the Kalmyk *uluses* – the Chief Curator of Kalmyk People only received 2000 rubles annually, and a secretary in the Kalmyk Administrative Council received 1000 rubles.⁹¹

The 1834 Provision endeavored to consolidate the highest religious authority in the hands of the LSGB. The state established the LSGB as the sole adjudicator of marital disagreements, inappropriate behavior of the Kalmyk *sangha*, and inappropriate awarding of monastic titles.⁹² Although making decisions with regard to the Buddhist issues was the LSGB's prerogative, the Board had neither the means nor the authority to execute these decisions. The legislation stipulated that the Kalmyk Administrative Council, under the leadership of Chief Curator of the Kalmyk people – a local body of the imperial administrative government was in charge of executing the decisions. Thus, the central administration reserved the authority to intervene in Buddhist religious affairs as they saw fit. For instance, in 1838 the LSGB reviewed the case of *gelong* Zodbo Mengunov who physically abused

⁸⁹ PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 19-20: В случае вакансий [...], Астраханский Военный Губернатор [...] избирая по своему усмотрению [...] благонадежное духовное лицо, [...].

⁹⁰ Ibid.: 20-21.

⁹¹ Ibid.: 39.

⁹² Ibid.: 27.

laymen Samtan Mukhurov and Tsorik Termkheev.⁹³ The LSGB ordered the *bagshi* from the Erketen *ulus* to punish *gelong* Zodbo Mengunov with twenty-one lashes and twenty-one bows to Tsongkhapa, as well as fourth-nine days of forced labor in the kitchen of the *Iki-khurul's* monastery.⁹⁴ However, the Kalmyk Administrative Council and Chief Curator Andrei Mikhailovich Fadeev found that the punishment was not sufficiently severe. As a result of Fadeev's intervention, the original punishment was modified and *gelong* Zodbo Mengunov was stripped of his monastic title.⁹⁵

The LSGB became the only legitimate body to decide in what cases awarding monastic titles was permitted. The Board also oversaw the Kalmyk *sangha* and the Buddhist monasteries. Stripping monks of their monastic titles was, however, only possible with the permission of the Astrakhan Governor. The LSGB was also supposed to submit an annual report to the Ministry of Interior that would cover such issues as statistical information on the number of monks, behavior of each individual monk, and the number of offerings received by monks and monasteries.⁹⁶ The remainder of the Buddhist *sangha* could hold the positions of *gelong* or *bagshi*, but they were not directly affiliated to the administrative apparatus. Their immediate responsibility was to cater to the religious needs of the Kalmyks – such as conducting prayer services and performing religious rituals.

The 1834 Provision attempted to build a clearly structured chain of command within the Kalmyk Buddhist hierarchy. As such, it stipulated that the local religious authority must be centralized in the hands of large monasteries (*iki khuruls*) and their *bagshis*.⁹⁷ The *bagshis* of the large monasteries were given the responsibility to closely oversee the quickest possible fulfillment of the LSGB's directives.⁹⁸ Although the authorities attempted to centralize the oversight of the implementation of LSGB's directives in the hands of the *bagshis* of large monasteries, those same *bagshis* were deprived the right to resolve many of the minor issues

⁹³ NARK: I-42: 1: 18: 5a.

⁹⁴ NARK: I-42: 1: 19: 1a-2a.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*: 3a-4b.

⁹⁶ PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 27-28.

⁹⁷ NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 30a-30b.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 32a.

with regard to their monasteries. As such, the *bagshis* of each *khurul*, both small and large, were ordered to contact the LSGB with regard to any issues ranging from appointment and misbehavior of one particular monk to internal disputes between different monks.⁹⁹

The 1834 Provision formalized the monastic hierarchy of the Kalmyk *sangha*¹⁰⁰; however, it also imposed many limitations, trying to undermine the *sangha's* social and political weight among the Kalmyks. Thus, the regulations restricted the Kalmyk *sangha's* freedom of movement: the monks were not allowed to leave the monasteries without written consent of their abbots or other religious authorities. And although they were in charge of resolving marital disputes, involvement in criminal cases and private property disputes was strictly prohibited, as these secular matters fell under the jurisdiction of the Russian courts. Meant to separate Buddhist monks from participation in Kalmyk political life, the 1834 Provision distinctly prohibited Buddhist *sangha* to write official petitions on the part of the laity.¹⁰¹ As the Buddhist *sangha* represented the most, if not only, educated stratum of Kalmyk “society” this legislation strongly affected mainly illiterate Kalmyk laypeople and reduced the *sangha's* importance. Despite the law's restrictive nature, the Kalmyk *sangha* continued to intervene in criminal and civil disputes. As a result, in February 1839, the Astrakhan Military Governor issued a new rule: to immediately disrobe any monk who was caught intervening in civil or criminal cases.¹⁰² Although the authorities attempted to curb the Kalmyk *sangha's* involvement in Kalmyk judicial matters, the *sangha's* assistance was still required for certain court and administrative procedures. In the end the Buddhist *sangha* was still involved in certain judicial procedures, however, their functions and responsibilities were severely restricted by the government.

Although the government's objectives in promulgating the 1834 Provision and founding the LSGB as a new institution of Buddhist leadership was clear – to incorporate Kalmyk Buddhism in Russia's religion-centered framework of imperial government – the

⁹⁹ Ibid.: 31a-31b, 33a-36b.

¹⁰⁰ PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 19.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: 27-28.

¹⁰² NARK: I-42: 1: 19: 1a-4b.

legislation also contained inherent contradictions. After all, while attempting to institutionalize the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy as a tool for controlling the Kalmyks and their territory, the authorities simultaneously endeavored to diminish the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's influence over the Kalmyks.

3.3. The LSGB: Discrepancies between Law and Reality

The LSGB was established in order to increase the legibility of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. Following Colin Hoag's (2011, 82) study on the anthropology of bureaucracy, the success or failure of such endeavors is in part determined by the successful implementation of bureaucratic laws, rules, and regulations, all of which prescribe or proscribe ideal, universal, and abstract behavior. These rules are usually, of course, not specific enough to fit every single local context – certainly not in an empire with the size and diversity of Russia. It was therefore up to the bureaucrats and local administrations (such as the Astrakhan Governor, the Chief Curator or the LSGB in case of the Kalmyks) to interpret these rules where necessary. Consequently, officials assumed that the produced outcome would correspond to the “ideal” or expected results when allocating specific functions and tasks to specialized bureaucratic agencies (Tallberg 2002, 26). However, since local contexts may not allow for a straightforward implementation of issued rules and because the interests of the receiving agents may differ from the allocating officials, results may well differ too (Tallberg 2002, 28). This was not different in the case of Kalmyk Buddhism.

Although in the 1834 Provision the authorities took deliberate measures to incorporate the Kalmyks' Buddhist affairs into the Russian administrative system, poor communication between different bureaucratic institutions meant there would be significant deviation from the adopted laws. Upon receiving legal jurisdiction over Kalmyk religious affairs in 1834, the local Russian administration in Astrakhan was not given any further instructions neither on the procedures nor on the content of their new responsibilities. On January 17, 1836, two years after the foundation of the LSGB, the Astrakhan Military Governor wrote to the Department of Foreign Confessions: “[I] have not yet received any

positive information about what the Lamaist Spiritual Kalmyk Governing Body is, what the functions of this Governing Body are, and what the responsibilities of its chairman are; and without it, I could not, and still do not have any means to start choosing said clergymen”.¹⁰³

The lack of sufficient knowledge about the Kalmyks and Buddhism on the part of the Russian local bureaucrats also created certain challenges for implementing the 1834 Provision. Local bureaucrats continued to rely largely on the assistance from Kalmyk noblemen, which in some cases created practices that diverged from the standard bureaucratic approaches. Not possessing sufficient knowledge about Kalmyk religion, language and culture, Astrakhan’s Governor allocated the task of the Lama’s selection to the Kalmyk *noyons* and governors of *uluses*.¹⁰⁴ However, according to the ethnographic accounts of Nikolai Nefed’ev (1834, 98) prior to the 1834 Provision, the common people were selecting suitable moral and knowledgeable Buddhist monks to be the Lama together with the Kalmyk *noyons*. Taking into account the nature of Kalmyk traditional society, we can assume that in reality, the Kalmyk commoners did not have much of a say in the selection of the Lama, yet the selection depended on whoever carried the preference of the Kalmyk *noyons*. Therefore, by introducing new rules for the selection of the Lamas the government aimed to influence who held sway within the community, by letting the Astrakhan Governor select the Lama. However, as the Governor was insufficiently informed on Kalmyk matters, he simply ordered to continue the existing practice of selection.

Although the Provision only stipulated that the Lama chairman of the LSGB should be a Buddhist monk, the Kalmyk noblemen acted according to their own interpretation of the Russian law and decided to elect the Lama from a pool of *khuruls’ bagshis*. Very likely not by mere chance, the first Lama chairman of the LSGB, *bagshi* Gabung Namkiev, who possessed a “deep knowledge and ability to learn, follows precisely the rules of the Buddhist faith, and

¹⁰³ RGIA: 821: 8: 1221: 2b: [Я] по не получению еще положительных сведений, в чем Вам угодно, я не имею на то средств, по не получению еще положительных сведений, в чем должно состоять Ламайское Духовное Калмыцкое Управление, и в чем состоят обязанности и права как сего Управления, так и председательствующего в нем; а без этого, я не мог, теперь еще не имею средств, преступать к избранию упомянутого Духовного.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*: 4a.

is the first man among the Kalmyk *sangha*"¹⁰⁵, happened to be of noble origin. Being absolutely isolated from the decision-making process, the Kalmyk commoners learned about the identity of the Lama through announcements of the *noyons* or governors of *uluses*, who were ordered to do so by the Governor of Astrakhan.¹⁰⁶ The Governor's decision to have the Kalmyk noblemen announce the appointment of a new Lama, was instrumental in fostering the Kalmyks' deference to the newly created post. Ultimately, the Lama became one of the many Russian state officials with the only difference that this position could be only held by a Kalmyk Buddhist monk, who had previously served as a *bagshi*. Favorable recommendations by the Kalmyk noblemen and the local Russian administration would also become mandatory requirements for any *bagshi* who wanted to be nominated Lama chairman of the LSGB. In light of these practices, we may conclude that the Lama cannot be considered solely as a Buddhist hierarch in Kalmykia, as he was also one of many high-ranking civil servants of the empire who happened to be a monk in charge of local religious affairs.

The selection of the first members of the LSGB was held in Astrakhan, where the Kalmyk nobility was ordered to send "the head *bagshi* or *gelongs*, who are older than twenty-five, and were never being in a court and persecuted and showed good morals and sensibility".¹⁰⁷ In the end, *Bagshi* Lushur from Baga-Derbet *ulus*, *gelong* Curum Denzen from Baga-Tsokhur *ulus*, *gelong* Gelik from Kharakhus *ulus*, and *gelong* Curum Dorzha from Khoshut *ulus* were selected to become the first members of the LSGB.¹⁰⁸ To ensure the loyalty and deference towards the Russian emperor, all members of the LSGB were to take an oath of allegiance. The Astrakhan Military Governor requested Lama Namkiev to administer the oath. The LSGB's members swore to emperor Nicholas I "who has a sublime origin and holds in his hands power and religion [...] to honestly and truthfully fulfil the obligations [...], and until the last drop of my blood and without sparing any efforts to be loyal to the His Imperial

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.: 4b: человека с большим познанием и способностями по учебной части, соблюдающего в точности правила Ламайской веры, первейшего из духовенства Калмыцкого.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.: 50a.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.: 15b: старших Бакшей или гелюнгов, которые имели бы не менее 25 лет от роду, не состояли под судом и следствием, с хорошою нравственностью и благоразумны.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.: 25a.

Majesty”.¹⁰⁹ Thereby in 1836, two years after the 1834 Provision was enacted, the LSGB began to function.¹¹⁰

The central government’s ignorance of Buddhist teaching and practices can be also discerned in the continued allocation of responsibilities to settle marital disagreements to the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*. After all, the Buddhist monastic vows required the clergy to be detached from worldly affairs and prohibited the monks from marrying, thus making them less than qualified to settle marital issues. Nevertheless, the imperial authorities assumed that the Buddhist monks should carry on the responsibilities to settle marital issues, similar to the clerics of Christian and Muslim creeds. The extent of their misconception is further illustrated by the informal use of various Orthodox ecclesiastical ranks to describe the different Buddhist echelons. *Gelong* were equated to Orthodox priests, *getsul* – to deacons, *manzhi* – to parish clerks, *bagshi* – to abbots, and the Lama to a bishop.¹¹¹

Despite some individual cases, it is important to note that the local authorities, for the most part, had rather limited abilities and resources to force the Kalmyk *sangha* to comply with the 1834 regulations. For example, the *sangha* continued to get involved in criminal and civil disputes.¹¹² Furthermore, despite the restrictions placed on all Kalmyk Buddhist clergymen’s freedom of movement, they continued to visit the Kalmyk *uluses* and even villages populated by baptized Kalmyks.¹¹³

The intentions of the 1834 Provision to establish clearly defined and centralized Buddhist hierarchies and responsibilities collided with the relative incompetence of the empire’s bureaucratic apparatus. The vague decrees from St. Petersburg together with a general lack of knowledge forced local officials to rely on the assistance of Kalmyk elites. The latter, in turn, interpreted the new rules as they saw fit, thus, preserving their right to have a

¹⁰⁹ NARK: I-42: 1: 1: 3: имеет высокое происхождение и, и является великим властелином, держащим в руках своих власть и религию. [...] великодушно и честно исполнять свои обязанности [...], до последней капли крови, не жалея своих сил буду преданным Его Императорского Величества.

¹¹⁰ RGIA: 821: 8: 1221: 20a.

¹¹¹ NARK: I-42: 1: 31: 4b.

¹¹² NARK: I-42: 1: 19: 1a-1b.

¹¹³ NARK: I-42: 1: 11: 1a.

say in the selection of the Lama, choosing the one from among their own. The government's interest in increasing the legibility of the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*, did however not stop at the top of the Buddhist hierarchies, yet also concerned lower-level monks, as will be discussed in the following section.

3.4. Taming the Clergy: The Introduction of Staff Quotas

“Among no other people of different confession is there such a great mass of Clergy relative to the population as in the Kalmyk *uluses*” wrote Astrakhan Governor Ivan Timiriazev¹¹⁴.¹¹⁵ According to official reports of the Kalmyk nobility: there were 105 *khuruls* and 5270 Buddhist monks in the Kalmyk steppes in 1836.¹¹⁶

There is much concordance in recent literature that this official number of *khuruls* was purposefully inflated (Bakaeva 1994, 25; Dordzhieva 2014, 100-101). As noted by Aleksei Pozdneev, the Kalmyk *sangha* themselves inflated the total number of *khuruls* by separating them and presenting each temple-yurt or temple within one monastery as a separate *khurul*.¹¹⁷ Pozdneev's argument was based on the annals of the larger Erdniev *khurul*, which only mentioned the existence of one *khurul* — Sertekchi-Lin. However, after 1836 the same *khurul* was divided into three: Dokshidin small *khurul* – from the name of Dokshid temple; Manlan small *khurul* – from the name of Manlan temple, and Sertekchi-Lin *khurul* – from the name of the actual original *khurul*.¹¹⁸ Thereby, we might assume that the number of actual monasteries was, possibly, smaller than reported. Indeed, during his travels among the Kalmyks in 1802-1803, Benjamin Bergmann (1804, 100-103) noted that each *khurul* consisted of three, four or six separate temples which were devoted to a specific deity and carried a different name. Thus, taking into account this information it would be fair to assume that the

¹¹⁴ In some archival documents the name also appears spelled as Temiriazev.

¹¹⁵ NARK: I-42: 1: 15: 6b: Ни в одном народе разных исповеданий не такой огромной массы Духовенства, против народонаселения, каково доселе существует еще в Калмыцких улусах.

¹¹⁶ NARK: I-7: 4: 7: 119a; NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 5a-6b.

¹¹⁷ OR RNB: 590: 146: 12a-12b.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.: 12b- 13b.

official number was, indeed, inflated, and each temple within one monastic compound was recorded as a separate and independent monastery.

While most of the literature generally agrees that the number of officially recorded *khuruls* was inflated, it does not generally discuss the possibility of a similar inflation of numbers regarding the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*. Most existing literature cites 5270 monks, yet does not engage with the numbers critically (Bakaeva 1994, 25; Dordzhieva 2014, 74; Karagodin 1987, 9). As such, when examining the number of recorded Buddhist monks in the early nineteenth century, and comparing it with the 5270 presented in 1836 raises some questions. Indeed, in 1803 Chief Inspector Strakhov (1810, 17) recorded 1546, Rovinskii (1809: 180) in 1809 cited the number 1707. Consequently, this means that either within the span of roughly thirty-years, the number of Buddhist monks more than tripled; obviously, the number of the Buddhist monks was inflated similarly to the number of *khuruls*; or mistakes were made in the process of counting them. Since the available sources do not shed any light on this issue, I would consider 5270 to be the official number of recorded Buddhist monks, however, I, nevertheless, must emphasize that this number did not necessarily represent the reality on the ground. Furthermore, one should also take into account that the 1836 report excluded data from the Mochagi¹¹⁹.

While the foundation of the LSGB aimed at institutionalizing and centralizing the religious authority within Kalmyk Buddhism, the government also directed their focus on the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* as a whole. Indeed, the government introduced quotas that were also commonly known as staff (Rus.: *shtat*) positions for the Buddhist monks and monasteries. The introduction of quotas meant that henceforth the government determined the legally permitted number of Kalmyk Buddhist monks and monasteries. The bureaucratization and standardization of Buddhist clerical affairs was further reaffirmed by the introduction of special charters for official staff monks. A charter would officially confirm one's being part of the staff Buddhist *sangha*. Opening with in the name of the Three Jewels, the Power of the

¹¹⁹ An area near the mouth of the Volga River where the poor Kalmyks who lost all of their cattle moved to do fishing or mined salt.

Dalai Lama, [and] the Lama of the Kalmyk People, the charters had a standard format which contained a monk's name, his clan, his level of monastic ordination, age and the name of the temple in which he served.¹²⁰ These charters of monastic status were to serve several purposes. On the one hand, a charter granted recognition to one's clerical and tax-exempt status, while, on the other hand, it also served as a controlling mechanism used by the Russian authorities. As the charters were issued only to the official staff *sangha*, and a monk was not allowed to leave one's *khurul* without his charter and official letter from the abbot, the authorities hoped that the existence of the charters could curb the illegal movement of monks in the steppes, tying them to their respective *khuruls*.¹²¹

The Chief Curator of the Kalmyk people in a meeting with Lama Namkiev made it clear to him that the Russian government planned to reduce the number of Buddhist clergymen. Representing a governmental institution, the LSGB had to supply St. Petersburg with exact information about Buddhist laws and practices: already on the first day of the LSGB's work – October 28th, 1836, the Chief Curator wanted to know from the Lama how many clergymen should be in one monastery according to Buddhist laws; and whether the number of clergymen could be decided not based on the number of monasteries, but on the number of yurts. When the government ordered a reorganization of the monasteries based on the religious needs of the local population and the everyday needs of the monks, the LSGB faced an uneasy challenge.

¹²⁰ NARK: I-9: 5: 1822: 79a; NARK: I-42: 1: 53: 1a-68b.

¹²¹ NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 33a-34b.

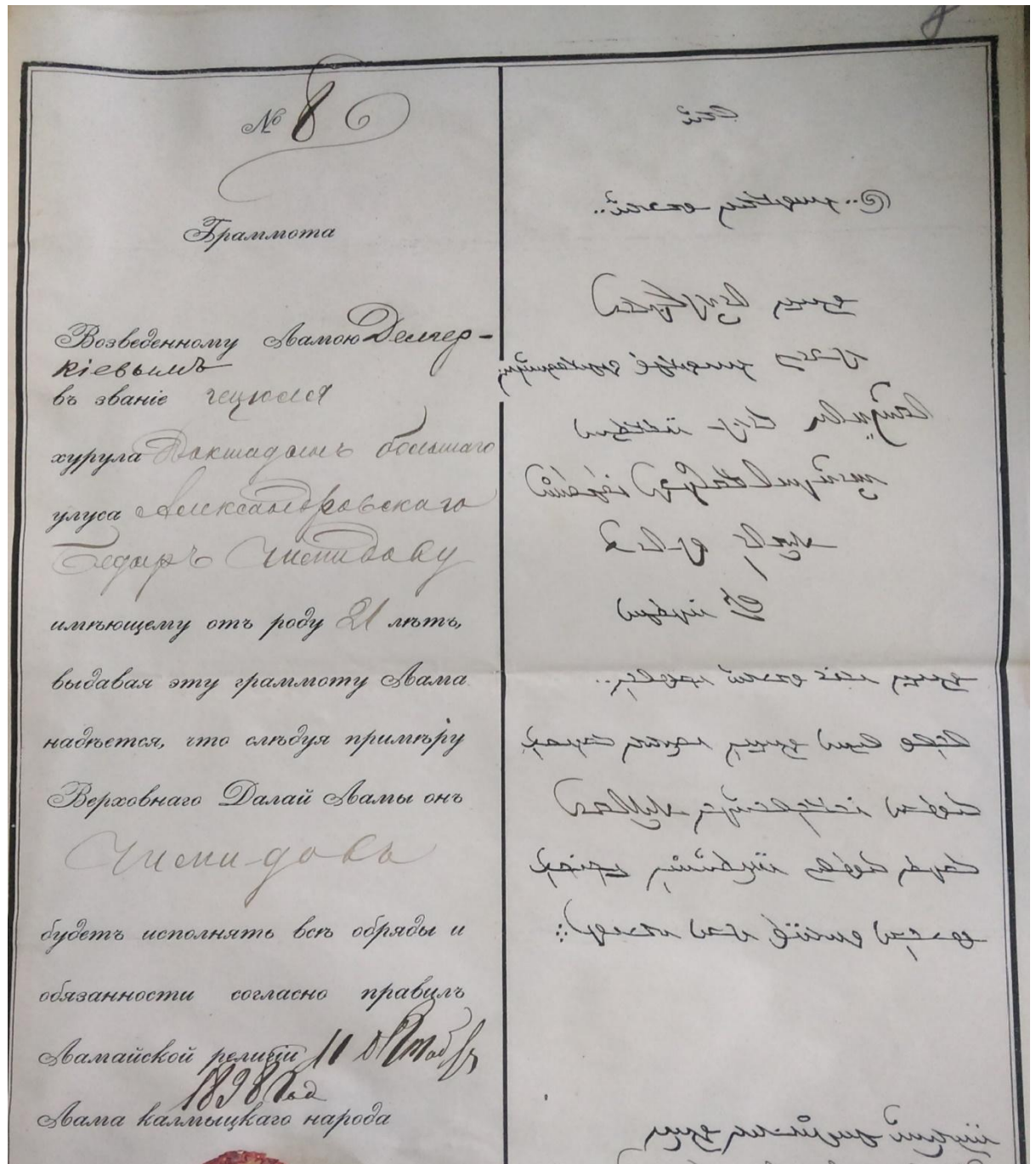


Figure 1. Copy of a Charter issued by Lama Delgerkiev on October 10th, 1898, appointing Bedyr Chimidov, being 21 years of age, to the rank of *getsul* at the Bol'shoi Dokshadaln *khurul*. NARK: I-42: 1: 53: 8.

Chief Curator Nikolaev assured the Lama of the authorities' best intentions for reducing the number of Buddhist monks. The government, he argued, intended to reduce the number of Buddhist monks so as to bring increased economic benefit for the Kalmyk commoners, thus contributing to the well-being of the overall Kalmyk population. Nikolaev further claimed that fewer monks would relieve the burden of duties for the Kalmyks.¹²² Astrakhan Governor Timiriachev also blamed the *sangha* for the Kalmyks' relative impoverishment,¹²³ claiming that fewer monks would give the Kalmyk commoners a chance at greater prosperity. It is important to note that the 1847 Provision prohibited Kalmyks from making payments to the monasteries or Buddhist clergymen, except for voluntary donations.¹²⁴ It was not voluntarily, however, that the Kalmyks had to pay the official annual tax of twenty-eight rubles and fifty kopeks per yurt, as well as provide border guards and carts where the government required them.¹²⁵ The Buddhist *sangha* was exempt from military service, from taxation and from serving as border guards (Nefed'ev 1834, 97). Thus, a lower number of monks, indeed, would mean more tax payers and able-bodied men per yurt to fulfil duties to the Kalmyk nobility and the state.

While economic incentives for reducing the number of Buddhist monks were rather obvious, political incentives also played a significant role in the authorities' pursuit of a reduction in *sangha* numbers. The existence of mobile Buddhist clergymen who possessed an extraordinary and almost unlimited authority among the Kalmyk laity presented a great challenge to the empire's quest for control.¹²⁶ Thus, limiting the freedom of movement of Buddhist *sangha* and putting them under closer surveillance of local authorities would limit their contacts with the Kalmyks, thereby possibly decreasing their influence. The Buddhist *sangha* had to be controlled and categorized for purposes of legibility, and it was difficult to do so until *khuruls* became stationary or at least until the route of their seasonal nomadic migration pattern was formalized and recorded. This way the Russian authorities would know

¹²² NARK: I-42: 1: 2: 13a-13b.

¹²³ NARK: I-42: 1: 15: 3a-4a.

¹²⁴ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 365.

¹²⁵ PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 55a-56a.

¹²⁶ NARK: I-42: 1: 15: 3a.

where to find them. The Buddhist *sangha* had to be regulated and controlled, and cut out of positions of authority in secular life, to make room for the state to enter the lives of the laity and regulate their secular affairs. Similar to the way in which the imperial government had instrumentalized the Orthodox Church and other “foreign confessions”, the government aimed to reform Kalmyk Buddhism along the lines of a centralized and institutionalized organizational structure.

The LSGB’s response to the Kalmyk Administrative Council’s question as to how many monasteries, *gelongs*, *getsuls* and *manzhis* are usually required to fulfil the religious needs of 200 yurts, illustrates the authorities’ quest for counting, listing and downsizing the *sangha*. In their response the LSGB reported that there is no provision on how many clergymen or monasteries should serve a given number of yurts. Indeed, the *noyons* and lamas usually decided how many clergymen to ordain based on the number of yurts in their own *ulus*. The LSGB continued to suggest that one *khurul* with 50 clergymen – 25 *gelongs*, 10 *getsuls*, and 15 *manzhis*, all of whom being suitably knowledgeable and of an appropriate age – would be sufficient to fulfil the people’s religious needs, without deviating too much from ancient customs.¹²⁷ Ordered to develop the best way to reduce the number of Buddhist monks, the LSGB had to compromise between the wishes of the Russian authorities and Kalmyks’ needs, hence slowly but surely transforming the institutions of Kalmyk Buddhism.

Following the LSGB’s recommendations, the government approved official quotas for the monasteries and *sangha*: 2650 monks and 76 *khuruls*.¹²⁸ Consequently, the administration in Astrakhan faced the challenge of disrobing almost 2500 Buddhist monks. Admitting his incompetence and the lack of knowledge on the religion of the people he was governing, the Astrakhan Governor delegated this responsibility to the LSGB.¹²⁹ At the same time he stressed the responsibility of the LSGB and the Lama, will be to imbue each *zaisang* and each Kalmyk with the knowledge that a reduction of the clergy by the government is intended to benefit everyone: since the reduction of clergy would, according to the official

¹²⁷ NARK: I-42: 1: 2: 3b.

¹²⁸ NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 10b.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*: 14a.

line, also reduce the expenses on supporting such a large number of *khuruls* and clergymen.¹³⁰ Except for the obvious competence of the LSGB to deal with religious issues, the reduction of the Kalmyk *sangha* by the LSGB and not by Russian authorities would help prevent unrest and give this decision some sort of legitimacy in the form of Buddhist clerical approval. “In order to prevent any Dissatisfaction and rumblings of the Clergy about the possibly biased execution of our decision by only one of the members of the LSGB present here, and since the members of this Board are elected by the Clergy of the there clans, that make up the Kalmyk people: Torgut, Derbet, Khoshut, who are under the guidance of the Lama, the head of the whole Clergy,....— therefore, the LSGB has decided to take over the implementation of this important and new among the Kalmyk People’s measure [...]”.¹³¹

According to the official report, before it downsized the number of Buddhist monks, the LSGB adjusted the number of *khuruls* in accordance to the approved quota. “Unimportant” *khuruls* were merged with “large” and “ancient” *khuruls*.¹³² The remaining *khuruls* were divided into two categories according to the number of monks that remained therein: the large *khuruls* comprised fifty monks; the small *khuruls* twenty-five.¹³³ Less important *khuruls* or *khuruls* built by *ulus* governors that fell outside of the official quota were neither closed nor destroyed, but merged with official *khuruls*.¹³⁴ While the official report described this turn of events, one should take into account that the initial number of 105 *khuruls* that the Russian government used as a starting point for determining the quota was most likely inflated in the first place.

Although the LSGB had officially been given the lead role in reducing the amount of Buddhist monks, the Board’s every move was closely overseen by the secular

¹³⁰ Ibid.: 39a-39b.

¹³¹ Ibid.: 17a-17b: Чтобы отвратить всякой Неудовольствие и ропот Духовенства в пристрастном исполнении такового предположения кем-либо одним из присутствующих Ламайского Правления, то, как члены онаго есть выбранные Духовенством из трех родов, составляющих вообще Народ Калмыцкий: Торгоутскаго, Дербетевскаго и Хошоутовскаго , составившие под руководством Ламы, Главы всего Духовенства, [...], – Ламайское Правление располагает исполнении столь важнаго и новаго в Народе Калмыцком введения, принять на себя [...].

¹³² Ibid.: 18a.

¹³³ Ibid.: 7b.

¹³⁴ NARK: I-42: 1: 2: 14a.

administration.¹³⁵ Most likely in a move to facilitate supervision, the LSGB assembled all the *khuruls* (except for the poorest ones that were situated in the Mochagi and on the banks of the Volga) near the main headquarters (Russian: *glavnaia stavka*) of each *ulus*. Monks who did not show up would be disrobed and severely punished. The *bagshis* were ordered to prepare lists with specifications on age, behavior and abilities of each monk, as well as when and why they had been ordained.¹³⁶ The LSGB visited all *uluses* and conducted examinations among the clergy in order to determine who would be included in the official staff clergy¹³⁷, claiming that “all those whose behavior was even slightly inappropriate for their ecclesiastical titles were disrobed, and only the best, the most knowledgeable and trustworthy are left”.¹³⁸ The Astrakhan Governor ordered the Lama to “inculcate in each of them [monks] their direct duties, with strict written proof, that from this moment onwards they must not leave their *khuruls*; [...] must not interfere into secular affairs; and do not spread like it was until now their authority on the minds of lay people, i.e. not to blind them [the lay people] when they are ill with their false [ideas].”¹³⁹

The numerical adjustment of the Kalmyk *sangha* according to the staff quota was interrupted by disagreements between the Astrakhan Military Governor Timiriachev and the LSGB. While Timiriachev suggested first disrobing the youngest monks, the LSGB chose to disrobe the elderly and sick monks and allow the 234 elderly monks that exceeded the official quota to stay in the monasteries as *dayanchi* until their death.¹⁴⁰ As Bergmann (1804, 98-99) noted during his travels among the Kalmyks, *dayanchi* were highly respected *gelongs* who isolated themselves in remote areas to devote themselves to prayers. Paul Hyer and Sechin Jagchid (1983, 87) wrote that *dayanchi* were monks “who are dedicated to a discipline of

¹³⁵ NARK: I-7: 4: 15: 12b; NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 20a.

¹³⁶ NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 43b-45a.

¹³⁷ Ibid.: 53a-54a:

¹³⁸ Ibid.: 78b: ибо всех, хоть мало позволявшие себе какое неприличное сану их поведение исключены, и остались теперь люди лучшие, ученые и надежные.

¹³⁹ NARK: I-42: 1: 15: 5b-6a: Внушили каждому прямые их обязанности, с строгим письменным подтверждением им, отнюдь не отлучатся от своих Хурулов, [...] невмешиваться в дела светские; не распространять как доселе было, власть свою над умом людей светского состояния, т.е. неослеплять их при болезнях ложными своими [...].

¹⁴⁰ NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 11a-11b, 24b, 75b.

meditation [...]. They may meditate in the monastery itself, in the surrounding territory, in the mountains, or in caves". However, it seems that to the imperial authorities, the Kalmyk *sangha* presented *dayanchi* as retired, elderly monks.¹⁴¹

The LSGB remained adamant regarding keeping these 234 elderly monks as *dayanchi*, and despite Timiriazev's displeasure.¹⁴² The LSGB did not retreat on the issue, and left these 234 monks in their *khuruls*. The LSGB defended its position to Timiriazev by arguing that if they were to once again start excluding the elderly monks from the monasteries, it could "upset the People [...] and cause rumblings, which just recently died down after the introduced novelties [new measures]."¹⁴³

Although Tsar Nicholas I approved the staff quotas at 76 monasteries and 2650 Buddhist monks respectively, he also ordered his administration to seek further possibilities to reduce the number of Buddhist monks.¹⁴⁴ Attempting to accommodate the wishes of his superiors, Governor Timiriazev continued to encourage the LSGB to further reduce the number of staff quota for the Kalmyk *sangha*.¹⁴⁵ However, despite the governor's pressure, the LSGB firmly refused to do so, pointing out that the Kalmyks for many years were "graciously patronized by the Most August Emperors [...] supporting by granted charters to the People [the Kalmyks], their former ancient rights [...]."¹⁴⁶ The LSGB also warned that, as the Kalmyks had not expected the first reduction in the number of Kalmyk *sangha*, they "were emotionally affected by these significant innovations".¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the LSGB argued that a further reduction in the number of monastic staff quotas so soon after the initial one, could compel the Kalmyks to conclude that the government strove "to get rid of it [the Buddhist clergy] in general, and take away all the rights that were granted to them, and this opinion if

¹⁴¹ NARK: I-7: 4: 103: 3b; NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 11a-11b, 24b, 75b.

¹⁴² NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 38a-38b.

¹⁴³ Ibid.: 76a: расстроить общий народный выбор [...] и вызовет ропот, едвали еще успокоевшагося от нечаянного всего нововедения.

¹⁴⁴ NARK: I-42: 1: 2: 13b -14a; NARK: I-42: 14: 7b; NARK: I-42: 1: 15: 4b.

¹⁴⁵ NARK: I-42: 1: 15: 8b.

¹⁴⁶ NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 74a: Милостью покровительствуемые Все Августейшими Императорами [...], подтверждающими жалуемыми Народу грамотами прежние древние права их.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.: 74a: чувствительно тронуты этими важнейшими нововедениями.

supported by the incitement of ill-meaning people could provoke them to openly expressed discontent.”¹⁴⁸ This combination of appeals to the privileges granted by previous rulers with threats of potential riots was successful. In the end, the Russian authorities postponed any further reduction of quotas of Buddhist *sangha* and allowed the elderly monks to remain in the monasteries until their death.¹⁴⁹

After the LSGB took up its functions, the government moved on to restructuring Kalmyk Buddhism in accordance with the state’s needs and preferences. The new legal quotas aimed to prevent any further uncontrolled proliferation of Buddhist monasteries and monks. Simultaneously, a clear selection mechanism for the *sangha* was to be introduced. Having the highly respected Kalmyk Buddhist monks who served on the LSGB implement the introduction of quotas provided the reform with a certain degree of legitimacy. Although the LSGB followed through with the authority’s request of reducing the number of Buddhist monks and monasteries in accordance with official quotas, whether the monks interpreted the request as it was intended, is up for discussion. Indeed, instead of shutting down the monasteries that exceeded the allowed number, the Board decided to merge surplus monasteries, thus making the remaining official monasteries significantly larger and richer. Furthermore, despite the demands of the Astrakhan Military Governor, the LSGB refrained from removing elderly monks from the monasteries, and found a way to postpone further reduction of quotas for Buddhist *sangha*. Nevertheless, as time passed, it became increasingly apparent that the government was not fully satisfied with the reforms of the 1834 Provision. Hence, in 1847, another piece of legislation was introduced with new provisions regarding Kalmyk Buddhism’s legal standing in the empire.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.: 77a: хотят лишь вовсе онаго, и отнять все прежде дарованные им права, а эт мнение при подстрекании людей неблагонамеренных, может раздражить явному ропоту.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.: 87a-87b; NARK: I-42: 1: 15: 4b.

3.5. The 1847 Provision: Dissolution of the LSGB and Empowerment of the Lama

Though being in effect for thirteen years, the 1834 Provision revealed some significant shortcomings. The transfer of the Kalmyk affairs to the purview of the Ministry of State Properties¹⁵⁰ in 1837, underlined the need for new legislative and administrative reforms. The Kalmyk Administrative Council was abolished and the governance of the Kalmyk affairs was transferred to the Head of the Astrakhan's Chamber of State Properties (*Astrakhanskaia Palata Gosudarstvennykh Imushchestv*), who at the same time served as Chief Curator of the Kalmyk People. To deal with the Kalmyk affairs a new Department of Horde Peoples was established under the Astrakhan Chamber of State Properties (*Ordynskoe Otdelenie Astrakhanskoi Palaty Gosudarstvennykh Imushchestv*). This department was reorganized into the Kalmyk Administration (Rus: Upravlenie Kalmytskim Narodom) in 1867 (Komandzhaev 2019, 233-234). The new Provision introduced changes to the Kalmyk governance and to the Kalmyk Buddhist affairs too. These changes would remain the guidelines for managing Kalmyk Buddhism until the end of the empire.

The 1847 Provision officially confirmed the Kalmyks' right to freedom of conscience. The government, however, drew distinct boundaries to this religious toleration: which only extended to the Kalmyks' "traditional" religion – Buddhism.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, it was expressly stipulated that should any unforeseen circumstances relevant to the Buddhist religion arise, the head Lama of the Kalmyk People (Kalmyk: *Halimag Tagchin Blama*, Russian: *Lama Kalmytskogo Naroda*) had to report immediately to the Chief Curator – who would in turn report to the higher authorities.¹⁵² Robert Crews argues that by officially granting freedom of conscience the Russian state held on to the right to "protect the orthodoxy" from "schims" (2003, 58). In other words, we could say that by granting freedom of conscience, the government reserved the right to intervene in Buddhist affairs whenever they deemed some aspect or other not to be in accordance with state norms. Thus, as the Russian Empire set out on the path of nation-state building in the second half of the nineteenth century, the

¹⁵⁰ PSZ II, Vol. 12, (1837), No 10834: 1039-1053.

¹⁵¹ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 350.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*: 366-367.

authorities were to use their prerogative to interfere in Buddhist affairs more and more frequently. As will be discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the Russian authorities justified their involvement in religious affairs by suggesting that they were acting in the interest of Buddhism and the Kalmyk population at large.

The 1847 Provision abolished the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board and transferred the highest spiritual authority to one lama: The Lama of the Kalmyk People¹⁵³, thus consolidating all religious authority in the hands of one person. One possible reason for the abolishment of the LSGB could be that by 1847 the most important and drastic reforms had already been implemented. The LSGB was, after all, a way of legitimizing some of the state's reforms across the Kalmyk tribes and *khuruls* by having a more or less representative body of monks. Additionally, it is not hard to imagine that controlling one Lama would be significantly more convenient than controlling a group of people. Although the Lama was the highest spiritual hierarch, he had to manage Kalmyk religious affairs under the close supervision and with the consent of Russian secular authorities. On paper, the Lama shared his authority with the Minister of State Properties.¹⁵⁴ In other words, supervision of Buddhist religious matters continued to be in the hands of both religious and secular authorities.

Andrei Kurapov (2016, 178-179) erroneously claimed that the participation of both religious (Lama) and secular authorities (Ministry of State Properties) in Kalmyk Buddhist life was unique for the Empire's confessional policies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the participation and involvement of both religious and secular authorities was not unique to Kalmyk Buddhism. In fact, in the case of Orthodox Christianity, the Chief Procurator of the Most Holy Synod was a secular government official; and, in the case of Islam, the Tauride Muslim Spiritual Governing Boards were under the jurisdiction of the Tauride Governor and the Department of Foreign Confessions.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Ibid.: 357.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.: 365-366.

¹⁵⁵ PSZ II, Vol. 6, (1831), No 5033: 341.

Unlike the LSGB, the Lama resided in a Kalmyk *ulus*, which brought him closer to the Kalmyk people. At the same time, as he resided in a Kalmyk *ulus*, we might presume that the Russian authorities would have more difficulty controlling his activities. Paul Werth (2014, 65-66) in his study on Russia's institutions for "foreign confessions" points out that in some cases new legislation and institutions introduced by the government often failed to acquire the necessary level of legitimacy with the people of "foreign confessions" to function properly. Similarly to Werth, a nineteenth century academic and official, Aleksei Pozdneev, pointed out that the Lama's authority usually only spread within his own *ulus*, because according to tradition each *bagshi* takes care of his own *khurul*, and outside involvement by other monks was very unusual.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, available source material clearly illustrates that the Lama's authority and influence over the rest of the Kalmyk *sangha* and population was far from absolute. On the contrary, the Lama himself was frequently forced to ask for support from the regional and local Russian authorities to fulfil the directives given to him by the center. Nevertheless, according to the legislation, from 1847 onwards the Lama became the sole key figure in managing Buddhist clerical affairs and was an intermediary figure between the Russian authorities and the Kalmyks where religious affairs were concerned.

Taking into account previous shortcomings, the 1847 Provision clearly defined the procedure of the Lama's appointment. It affirmed the increased participation of Russian officials in the process, partially reducing the Kalmyk nobility's role to an advisory one. The new selection procedures were anything but straightforward. They partially drew on the established practice of choosing the Lama from a pool of *bagshis* of large *khuruls*. However, now it was the Chief Curator who was to compile a list of all *bagshis* of large *khuruls* and enquire about the nobility's preferred candidates for the post of the Lama. These recommendations would be presented to the Astrakhan Governor who would attach his personal recommendation and send it to the Minister of Interior. The Minister would then present this to the emperor for confirmation by the Highest Decree.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ NARK: I-42: 1: 44: 26a-26b; RGIA: 1291: 85: 42: 66b.

¹⁵⁷ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 364.

The state confirmed the Lama's exclusive authority over marital affairs, inappropriate behavior of the clergy, inappropriate ordination, and the supervision of *khuruls* and the *sangha*. Although new monastic appointments could only be made with the permission of the Ministry of State Properties, the Lama could unilaterally disrobe monks, something the LSGB could only have done with the permission of the Astrakhan Governor. One of the Lama's new responsibilities was to provide financial support to *khuruls*, the resources of which had until then come from voluntary donations.¹⁵⁸

Similar to previous legislation, the 1847 Provision strictly limited the Lama's authority to religious issues. To prevent his involvement in secular affairs, the Lama was strictly barred from dealing with property and criminal cases¹⁵⁹, even when they concerned religious objects. When a dispute arose between two monks concerning Buddhist ritual objects, the Lama was denied the right to resolve the issue, as the Russian government argued that this was a secular matter of private property.¹⁶⁰ So the objects were considered private property first and Buddhist ritual objects second.

The Russian authorities, in their striving for increased Kalmyk legibility, assumed that the Lama would take over all the administrative and managerial functions previously performed by the LSGB. Therefore, the Lama had to submit an annual report to the Chief Curator which included statistical information on the number of clergy and temples, and their financial means.¹⁶¹

The new law reaffirmed the limitations imposed on the Kalmyk *sangha* by the 1834 Provision. The *sangha* was still limited in their freedom of movement, getting involved in secular matters and writing petitions on the part of the Kalmyks. The Lama had to ensure the *sangha's* compliance with these stipulations. The consequences for noncompliance with Russian law were expulsion from the monastic order or downgrading of their monastic rank. The fact that the Lama's exclusive prerogative included disrobement and demotion but not

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.: 365-367.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.: 367.

¹⁶⁰ RGIA: 383: 14: 16568: 15a.

¹⁶¹ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 367.

ordination and promotion, indicates the general evolution of the authorities who were attempting to reduce the number of Buddhist clergymen.

The Ministry of State Properties had, in some respects, taken to micromanaging Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. As such it ensured that their number did not exceed the sanctioned limit and oversaw the equal use of Kalmyk pastures between the laity and the *sangha*. Furthermore, even the building and renovation of *khuruls* had to be authorized and overseen by the Ministry of State Properties, which also ensured that all the funds for the building and renovation of *khuruls* came from voluntary donations. The official language of administration was Russian with a translation into Kalmyk provided for practical purposes.¹⁶²

While the 1847 Provision further reformed the administrative structure of Kalmyk Buddhism at the highest level, it did not directly interfere with the lower echelons of the Buddhist monastic establishment. After all, confessional belonging was one of the key factors to successfully classifying and categorizing the empire's people, hence the government did not oppose the practicing of Buddhism in the private sphere. The Kalmyk *sangha* was to continue catering to the Kalmyks' religious needs by conducting prayers and religious services. The existence of Buddhism was tolerated as long as it complied with Russian rules and fit in the empire's carefully-crafted multiconfessional establishment.

Although it does not directly relate to the Kalmyk Buddhism's incorporation into Russia's multiconfessional administrative and legal systems, the sections of the 1847 Provision that defined the legal rights of baptized Kalmyks are nonetheless important to mention. They officially provided legal protection and generous material compensation for both Kalmyk noblemen and commoners in the event of their conversion.¹⁶³ Although offering protection and material incentives to promote conversion to Christianity, at this point, the government did not encourage the forceful conversion of Kalmyks. While the Russian government was attempting to incorporate Kalmyk Buddhism into the empire's

¹⁶² Ibid.: 365-367.

¹⁶³ Ibid.: 351-353

multiconfessional establishment, active parallel Orthodox missionary activities could do harm to this process.

A similar position of religious tolerance was adopted with regard to students of the newly-founded Astrakhan Grammar School for Kalmyks who wanted to invite Buddhist monks to the school premises in order to conduct rituals and prayers. Although the gymnasium's purpose was to "spread among the Kalmyks the Russian language and to prepare talented translators and interpreters"¹⁶⁴, or more generally introduce Kalmyk students to the main activities of truly 'civilized' people, namely, husbandry and horticulture¹⁶⁵; the government, nonetheless, did not prevent the Kalmyk students from practicing their religion during their studies.

It is important to mention here that the decree that founded the grammar school for the Kalmyk students specifically stated that Buddhist monks should be invited to conduct a prayer on important holidays. However, the decree specified that those Buddhist monks should be from the circle of the Lama, which meant that they were politically trustworthy. Therefore, we can assume that, at that time, despite the government's attempt to impose more severe control on the Buddhist clergy, the goal of cultural Russification of the Kalmyks was not yet set. Furthermore, from the aforementioned we can conclude that, despite imposing administrative control on the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and preventing their involvement in political and secular affairs, it seems that the imperial administration did not yet encroach upon the private spiritual domain of Kalmyk Buddhists.

Recent research seems to support this conclusion. Kurapov, for example, argued that the 1847 Provision introduced state control over Buddhists, while at the same time legitimizing Buddhist ideology and preserving the representation of Buddhist clergy in the governing apparatus and ceremonial side of Russo-Kalmyk interactions, such as the use of Buddhist oaths in the *zargo* court (2018, 179). While Kurapov's general statement is correct,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.: 372: распространения между Калмыками Русского языка и приготовления способных переводчиков и толмачей.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.: 372-373.

one must not lose sight of some important historical details. Buddhism was first recognized and tolerated as a foreign confession in the Russian Empire long before the 1847 Provision was enacted. After all, the Tsars of old had bestowed luxurious gifts and official charters on previous Kalmyk Lamas; and the 1825 Regulations as well as 1834 Provision had also included senior members of the Buddhist clergy in the Russian administrative system.

What the 1847 Provision did was attempt to finalize Kalmyk Buddhism's official incorporation into Russia's multiconfessional administrative and legal framework. Reasserting the limits that were imposed on the Buddhist clergy by the 1834 Provision, the new legislation from 1847 attempted to eradicate the shortcomings inherent to previous pieces of legislation. The increasingly centralized religious authority was concentrated into the hands of the Lama of the Kalmyk People, which presumably would make Kalmyk Buddhism somewhat easier to control. However, as noted by Orthodox priest Gurii (1915, 414), while the government managed to weaken the Kalmyk *sangha's* authority by introducing staff quotas, the same government strengthened Buddhist institutions by introducing a centralized hierarchy to what was essentially a decentralized system. As will be shown in the next section, elevating one Buddhist monk to all-powerful had, at times, an effect contrary to that desired by the authorities; and, as we will see, the introduction of certain rules and norms did not necessarily mean that these rules were abided by.

3.6. The Lama's Resistance and the Staff Quota Adjustment

As mentioned before, already when setting the legal quotas at 76 monasteries and 2650 monks¹⁶⁶ under the 1834 Provision, Nicholas I stressed the need for further reduction of the Buddhist *sangha*. Due to difficulties in enforcing the initial changes, the introduction of staff Buddhist monks did not lead to the reduction of the Kalmyk *sangha* to the extent

¹⁶⁶ NARK: I-42: 1: 2: 13b-14a; NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 7b.

expected by the authorities. As a consequence, the new 1847 Provision introduced a further reduction of staff quota to a mere 67 monasteries and 1656 monks.¹⁶⁷

Minister of State Properties at the time, Pavel Dmitrievich Kiselev, stated that the government decided to reduce the number of Buddhist monks due to complaints by the previous Chief Curator who had argued that the existing number disproportionately burdened the Kalmyks.¹⁶⁸ This time, the reduction of Kalmyk Buddhist clergy went even less smoothly than in the late 1830s. Lama Dzhinzan, who was appointed soon after the adoption of the 1847 Provision, had a very strong opinion on the religious rights of the Kalmyk people. He was well aware of the history of Russia's relationships with the Kalmyks, and was pointing out to the right to freedom of following Buddhism that the Kalmyk people had been granted by previous monarchs.¹⁶⁹

After the Ministry of State Properties refused to allow the ordination of new monks on the grounds that it would exceed the legal quota Lama Dzhinzan voiced his dissatisfaction directly to Tsar Nicholas I, thus avoiding an overt conflict with the administration. Dzhinzan asked to keep the number of staff monks at 2650 monks and argued that “the reduction of clergy and *khuruls* could strongly affect the Kalmyks' morality.”¹⁷⁰ Dzhinzan, in other words, emphasized the importance of the *sangha* in Kalmyk communities. In his letter to Nicholas I, Lama Dzhinzan wrote that he supported all “the efforts of the Russian government to accustom the Kalmyks to sedentary life and set up agriculture among them [...]”.¹⁷¹ At the same time, Dzhinzan argued that despite his great desire to assist the government in instilling in the Kalmyks the sense that sedentary life and agricultural activities will benefit them, it was precisely, a shortage of Buddhist monks that prevented him, Lama Dzhinzan, from assisting the government in attaining this goal. Therefore, Dzhinzan argued that since the *sangha* “are in their own way more educated than all other Kalmyks, and fully understand the

¹⁶⁷ RGIA: 383: 14: 16571 (1): 3b, 45b-46a; RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 17a.

¹⁶⁸ RGIA: 383: 14: 16571(1): 45b-46a.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.: 2a-3a.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.: 4a.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.: 4b: При всем старании Русского Правительства, приохотить калмыков к оседлой жизни и водворить между ними быт сельского хозяйства [...].

Government's goal, could serve as the most true means of eradicating the laziness and idleness of the Kalmyk commoners, and replace them with civic values."¹⁷²

It is important to note that despite Lama Dzhinzan's claims, it is unlikely that the *sangha* had any actual interest in promoting Kalmyk assimilation with the wider Russian population, quite to the contrary. The spread of agricultural activities and sedentary life among the Kalmyks would undoubtedly further disrupt their traditional way of life, hence further infringing upon the traditional social hierarchies in which the *sangha* occupied an authoritative position. Nevertheless, Lama Dzhinzan's claims illustrated one of the many attempts of the *sangha* to prove their importance and willingness to serve the state.

Lama Dzhinzan's idea that the *sangha* could facilitate the integration of the Kalmyks into the empire did not find the government's support. Furthermore, despite Lama Dzhinzan's opposition, the government was committed to the idea of further reducing the numbers of monasteries and monks. To appease Lama Dzhinzan, Minister Kiselev suggested instead to co-opt the Lama by increasing his allowance.¹⁷³ The Lama refused saying that "to support my single soul – does not require much money, especially for a person like myself."¹⁷⁴ Lama Dzhinzan went on to argue that "My only necessity is to look after the Kalmyk religious belief, the Kalmyk people are deeply mourning the division of the clergy like the Russians into parishes according to yurts, therefore the People – presenting me with this knowledge – ask me to petition you not to ban their religious belief".¹⁷⁵

In 1852 Minister Kiselev responded to Lama Dzhinzan stating that Kalmyk Buddhism was protected by the principle of religious tolerance that extended to all imperial subjects.

¹⁷² Ibid.: 4b: в своем роде образованнее всех других калмык, и понимая вполне цель Правительства, может служить самым верным средством к искоренению в простолюдинах Калмыках лености и праздности, и вместо их водворить быть Гражданского благоустройства.

¹⁷³ Ibid.: 46a- 46b.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.: 69b: для содержание одной души – денег много не требует, в особенности лицу подобному мне. See also Schorkowitz 2018, 77-78.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.: 69b-70a: Одна только моя надобность печись о Калмыцком вероисповедании, которого Калмыцкий Народ, лишись через разделение духовенства их подобно Русским на приходы по кибиточно, - остается в совершенном прискорбии, посему то Народ – представляя о сем знание моему, просят меня ходатайствовать о незапрещении им вероисповедания.

As such, Kiselev argued that because there was “a complete freedom of conscience in Russia the Government never wanted to keep the Kalmyks from practicing their religious beliefs or to divide the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy into parishes”; furthermore, as the Russian sovereign was a patron for all religions of the peoples under his authority, the existence of even a small constraint to the Kalmyk religious affairs was not acceptable, and that the local authorities were supposed to oversee this.¹⁷⁶ However, while claiming that undermining the Kalmyk religious rights was never the government’s intention, Kiselev, at the same time, refused to increase the quota for staff Buddhist monks. He argued “that it is not the number of clergymen that influences the spread of religious teaching among the people, but the enlightened and active nature of the clergy’s preaching, as well as their ethical way of life, which served as an example to the people”.¹⁷⁷

Despite the imperial authorities’ orders, throughout his term Lama Dzhinzan refused to reduce the number of Buddhist monks to numbers set out in the 1847 Provision.¹⁷⁸ Put bluntly, Lama Dzhinzan refused to obediently fulfil his administrative functions as the official head of the Kalmyk Buddhism. However, after Dzhinzan’s passing in April 1852, the numbers, nevertheless, were officially adjusted in accordance with the quotas. As such, by the end of the 1850s many Buddhist monasteries had been closed. In 1859, Baga-Derbet *ulus* alone saw the closure of no fewer than eight *khuruls*: Arshi-Sangling, Bakhan-Bagshin, Tsenden-Dorzhin, Bogdan (Dalai-Lamin), Gempeling, Lamrim-Cheling, Baga-Rashi-Limbo, and Rashi-Cheling.¹⁷⁹

After the boisterous term of Lama Dzhinzan, the authorities were very careful when appointing the next Lama. In 1852, going against the opinions of the Kalmyk noblemen who had voted for the Ikitsokhurov *ulus bagshi* Erdeni, Chief Curator Tagaichinov deemed *bagshi* Gelik of Kharakhuso-Erdniev *ulus* a better candidate for the post. According to Tagaichinov,

¹⁷⁶ NARK: I-42: 1: 43: 7a-8a: при полной свободе всех вероисповеданий в России, никогда не было в виду Правительства ограничивать калмыков в их вероисповедании или разделять их духовенство на приходы. See also Schorkowitz 2018, 77.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.: что распространение в народе религиозных правил зависит не столько от числа духовных лиц, сколько от просвещенного и деятельного их назидания в духе религии, а также нравственного образа жизни, которая должна служить живым примером для народа. See also Schorkowitz 2018, 78.

¹⁷⁸ NARK: I-42: 1: 44: 5b.

¹⁷⁹ NARK: I-9: 5: 1732: 31a.

Gelik would be more appropriate, not only because of his high morals and experience in the matters of governing the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy, which he obtained when he was a member of the LSGB, but also because Gelik “has always been ready to facilitate the Government in all matters beneficial to the people.”¹⁸⁰ Eventually, the Government heeded the Chief Curator’s recommendation and Gelik was appointed Lama.¹⁸¹

Although the government believed Lama Gelik to be more pliant, his obedience came at a price. In 1854, soon after his appointment, Lama Gelik visited St. Petersburg where he petitioned Minister of State Properties Kiselev to increase his annual salary and to cover his travel expenses to the capital. However, more importantly, Lama Gelik asked for the permission to construct a small wooden *khurul* on the stone foundation at his residence at Shurash Chordyn. He promised that he would carry the financial burdens for the construction of this *khurul* from his personal funds, however, he also asked to staff this *khurul* with eight *gelongs*, five *getsul* and five *manzhi* on top of the existing quotas.¹⁸² This is a remarkable request, especially when we consider that according to the available records in 1854 the number of *khuruls* already exceeded the allowed staff quota by five large and four small *khuruls* – something Gelik, as Lama of the Kalmyk People, would certainly have been aware of. Nevertheless, Lama Gelik petitioned the Minister of State Properties to, essentially, bend the law by allowing the construction of an additional *khurul* and appoint a body of Buddhist monks that would exceed the staff quotas.¹⁸³

While the 1847 Provision aimed to standardize and systematize the rules and norms of governing Kalmyk Buddhism, the Empire’s bureaucratic apparatus continued to lack a unified approach. Indeed, various ministries, departments and administrators frequently had diverging opinions depending on the issue in question. In the case of Lama Gelik’s petition to construct his own *khurul*, for example, the Department of Foreign Confessions was inclined

¹⁸⁰ RGIA: 383: 16: 20083: 4b-5a: по всегдашней готовности содействовать Правительству во всех полезных для народа предприятиях

¹⁸¹ Ibid.: 5a, 9a.

¹⁸² RGIA: 383: 16: 20099: 4a-4b.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

to allow the construction, in spite of the Ministry of State Properties' advice to the contrary. However, the Department of Foreign Confessions did refuse to appoint the additional Buddhist monks and ordered Gelik to use existing staff monks.¹⁸⁴ This example illustrates the internal contradictions within the empire's bureaucracy and the way these contradictions at times played to the *sangha's* advantage.

The government's lack of a unified approach to Kalmyk Buddhism could be also seen in the discord that arose regarding the possible creation of the post of vice-Lama. When Lama Gelik succeeded Lama Dzhinzan, the Kalmyk Administration discovered that, as most Lamas tended to be rather old at the time of their appointment, they did not occupy the post for long. Considering that the selection of a new Lama took some time, in the time between two appointments, there was no one who took care of Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. In order to fix this problem and ensure a smooth transition of power, the Chief Curator proposed to introduce the post of a vice-Lama. This was to be a *bagshi* who would stand in for the Lama in case of illness and would be the designated and effective successor for the Lama of the Kalmyk People.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the Chief Curator argued that introducing a vice-Lama's would also save time and effort concerning the selection process.¹⁸⁶ While the Astrakhan Governor and the Department of Foreign Confessions were in favor of introducing a vice-Lama, the Ministry of State Properties held a different view. Minister Kiselev fervently opposed and argued that "[...] any strengthening of the Lamaist Clerical Hierarchy will be, in my opinion, in direct contradiction to the Government's goals."¹⁸⁷ Indeed, in his letter from November 28th, 1852, Kiselev emphasized that it was important to maintain the current state of affairs, in which the government could delay the Lama's appointment or choose a Lama according to their own views and needs.¹⁸⁸ In the end, the post of a vice-Lama was never introduced.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ RGIA: 383: 16: 20083: 3a.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.: 5b.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.: 6b: всякое усиление Ламайской Духовной Иерархии было бы, как я думаю, в прямом противоречии с видами Правительства.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.: 6b-7a.

This issue illustrates a perfect example of disarray and discord among different imperial administrative and governmental bodies that were responsible for managing Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. However, in addition to demonstrating the lack of a unified approach towards Kalmyk Buddhism among the various imperial departments, the writings of Minister of State Properties Kiselev revealed a new orientation in the government's policies. A letter written in 1852 stated that the government was ready to "the Kalmyks' fusion with the general Christian population".¹⁸⁹ The government's decree from December 31st, 1851 offered twenty-years of tax exemption for those baptized Kalmyks who would become sedentary and adopt sedentary agricultural practices.¹⁹⁰ The Most Holy Synod began to prepare Christian missions, and the Ministry of State Properties ordered the gradual building of roads across Kalmyk steppes and encouraged Russians and Kalmyks to settle along these roads, so that Kalmyk and Russian children might attend parish schools together.¹⁹¹

This letter provides us with a first inkling of the shift in policy that was underway in the early 1850s among Russian administrators – a shift away from the mere management of Buddhist affairs towards measures aimed at Russification.

3.7. Conclusion

As discussed at the outset one of the state's main objectives as described by James Scott is making its subjects and environment "legible". With its many peoples and territories, the Russian Empire's administration, too, was tasked with making the environment and diverse peoples "legible" in order to effectively control them. From the eighteenth century onwards, the government attempted to ground its authority over its diverse peoples in religion. Consequently, Russian attempts at "legibility" also focused on religion and religious institutions. As we can see from the evidence summarized above, this was certainly the case with regard to Kalmyk Buddhism.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.: 6a-6b: и слиянию с общим Христианским населением.

¹⁹⁰ PSZ II, Vol. 26 (1851), No 25864: 209a.

¹⁹¹ RGIA: 383: 16: 20083: 6a-7a.

In the 1830s and 1840s the government incorporated Kalmyk Buddhism into the Empire's administrative and legal framework with intent to create a more centralized, clearly defined and state-directed hierarchical structure for Kalmyk Buddhism. The 1834 and 1847 Provisions introduced some changes to the institutional structure of Kalmyk Buddhism. Quotas were set up for monks and monasteries, the legal domain of the *sangha's* activity was restricted, and new institutions were established to govern the clergy and their interactions with believers. These changes were supposed to aid the empire in governing Kalmyk Buddhism, while imbuing the Russian authorities with a sense of legitimacy. As Schorkowitz puts it: "The structure and hierarchy of the Lamaist clergy was meant to reflect that of the Russian Orthodox church. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Lamaist clergy went through a process of institutionalization, transforming it from a community church into a secular representational and state church" (Schorkowitz 1992, 413-414).

Some research suggests that the imperial government was quick to assert complete control over Kalmyk religious affairs. Bakaeva (1994, 38), for example, argues that the government already achieved this goal through the introduction of the 1825, 1834 and 1847 laws. Burchinova (1977, 32), in turn, goes so far as to argue that the Buddhist 'church' lost its self-government and fell under the absolute control of the Russian imperial administration. It seems to me, however, that both Bakaeva and Burchinova exaggerate the government's level of control over Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. Instead, I would suggest that the government's effective control over Kalmyk Buddhism is unlikely to have been so absolute. After all, as we have seen, despite the government's best efforts, legibility and control were often hard to attain. The implementation of the 1834 and 1847 Provisions had revealed some significant shortcomings. The imperial government lacked a unified approach towards Kalmyk Buddhism, but also had limited authority over its own bureaucratic institutions. Aside from miscommunication between different parts of the imperial administration, many monks and abbots never clearly received or followed the administration's instructions.

The Russian model of managing foreign confessions heavily relied on the assistance of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. At times, they even actively participated in the development and

implementation of new rules for governing Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. The Buddhist clergy that found themselves in positions of power, like the members of the LSGB and the Lama, also used their position and the lack of political unity at the governmental level to reinterpret and contest the rules and laws for governing Kalmyk Buddhism.

Within the span of roughly fifteen years, the laws and principles that integrated Kalmyk Buddhism into the empire's multi-confessional establishment were finalized. The 1847 Provision would end up defining the interactions and relations of the Russian government and Kalmyk Buddhist clergy until the end of the empire. While these new sets of rules and norms had certain shortcomings, Russia's attempts at making Kalmyk Buddhism more legible did introduce certain changes to the internal institutions of Kalmyk Buddhism. These changes will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 4. Between Buddha and Tsar: Transforming Internal Institutions

The 1834 and 1847 Provisions legally defined the place of Kalmyk Buddhism in the imperial administrative and legal framework. The instructions did not only imply transformations with regard to the religion's governance and hierarchy, but also disrupted or altered many of the previously existing social and institutional arrangements. As a consequence, these disruptions and alterations also induced a transformation of Buddhist internal institutions.

This chapter explores these transformations in more detail. The first section examines the ways in which Buddhist political theory allowed the Kalmyk *sangha* to incorporate Russian emperors into the Buddhist realm. Put differently, we will examine the ways in which the loyalty of Kalmyk Buddhism towards political authorities legitimized and sacralized the ruler in question. After all, the incorporation into an Empire ruled by an Orthodox emperor required the Kalmyk *sangha* to define their position *vis-à-vis* the Russian autocrat.

A second line of investigation examines the transformation of the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy. In their intentions to increase the legibility of Kalmyk Buddhism and its *sangha*, the imperial authorities somewhat disrupted the traditional aspects of the Kalmyk monastic economy while, at the same time, introducing new measures of control, interaction and accountability.

A third and final line of investigation explores Kalmyk Buddhism's role in the Empire's judicial system. In this case, the Kalmyk *sangha* was expected to fulfil new functions, that resulted in the development of a new position – a *gelong-comissioner for oaths* (Kalm.: *andaḃār bagshi*; Rus.: *prisiazhnyi geliung*).

4.1. Loyalty to Authority: Legitimization, Sacralization and Opportunism

Contrary to Max Weber (1958, 227) who claimed that Buddhism is “a specifically unpolitical and anti-political status religion”, early Buddhist sources indicate otherwise.

Buddhist political theory considers kingship the ideal form of government. *Aggana Sutta*¹⁹² suggests that the king's legitimacy derives from a social contract between him and the people, binding the king to the goal of avoiding anarchy. The people willingly submit part of their sovereignty to the king, thus granting him the punitive power to maintain law and order (Gokhale 1969, 733-734; Tambiah 1976, 10-31). The Buddhist sutras draw kings into Buddhist tradition by depicting them in three ways. The first way identifies the Buddha with the first king of the world Mahasammata, either by claiming that Buddha was the first king himself in a previous incarnation or that Buddha was a direct descendant of Mahasammata's. The second way identifies kings with *Bodhisattvas* or Buddha Maitreya. The third way identifies contemporary and historical kings as descendants of the first king of the world and the Buddha (Moore 2016, 32-42).

Buddhist sutras suggest a mutually supportive relationship between Buddhism and political authority, particularly in the form of kingship. Early on, royal patronage was instrumental to spread Buddhism across northern India — kings built monasteries and supported the *sangha*. In return, the *sangha* offered loyalty to political rulers and provided Buddhism as a tool for legitimizing their authority (Gokhale 1969, 737-738; Swearer 2010, 71-72). As such, a spiritually and morally advanced king was regarded as *chakravartin* (a universal and enlightened monarch) – who adheres to the rule of *Dharma* and promotes Buddhism (Moore 2016, 19). In this case *Dharma* could be understood not merely as Buddhist teaching and doctrine but also as a righteous and moral order (Willemsen 2004, 217). Hence, one might say that Buddhism naturally gravitated to strong political centers.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, this synergy was instrumental for the spread of Buddhism among the Mongols. Mongol rulers provided patronage, while Buddhism in return legitimized their authority. At the same time, Buddhism was also used to further the authority's political goals. Elverskog, for example, described how the Manchus of the Qing Empire made use of ideas of Buddhist rule to consolidate their power over the Mongols (2006, 4-7). In analogy of how Russian authorities reserved the right to appoint the Lama of the Kalmyk People, the

¹⁹² *Agganna Sutta* describes a teaching discourse by the Buddha on the origins of life, social order and class.

Qing dynasty validated the head of Mongolian Buddhism – the Bogd Gegeen – and provided patronage to the *sangha* (Jerryson 2007, 31). Of course, Buddhism was too small and insignificant in relation to the size of the Russian Empire to merit a one-for-one equation. Unlike Qing China, the Russian authorities did not promote but merely tolerated Buddhism, however, similar to the situation in the Qing Empire, Buddhism also contributed to the legibility of Buddhist communities.

The Russian Empire's Code of Laws protected the dominance of Orthodoxy, and obliged the emperor to be a member of the Orthodox Church.¹⁹³ Notwithstanding these clear impediments, Nikolay Tsyrempilov argues that the idea of converting the Emperor – and thereby making Buddhism the state religion – was always present in the background of Buddhist hierarchs' relationship with Russian monarchs. After all, the Buddhist worldview acknowledges the existence of non-Buddhist lands, where Buddhism was yet to be spread. However, since the Buriat and Kalmyk Buddhists of the Russian Empire lacked the same level of political patronage enjoyed by Buddhists in Tibet and Mongolia, they had to devise different strategies to protect and promote Buddhism (Tsyrempilov 2009, 119; 2013, 201-208).

Tsyrempilov argued that in their relations with the Russian authorities Buriat Buddhists adhered to the principle of *upaya* (skilful means), that required a combination of Buddhist religious knowledge and knowledge of the local political system and laws. As such, since the patronage of the political elites was a prerequisite for the flourishing of Buddhism, the clergy was eager to gain the support of Russian rulers and the political elites for the preservation and promotion of the *Dharma*. For this reason, Buriat Buddhists attached a great deal of importance to their relations with the imperial court. For the Buriat Buddhists audiences, donations, and even imperial decrees allowing the construction of monasteries and appointment of Buddhist hierarchs were, at least presented as, signs of the benevolence of the Russian emperor (Tsyrempilov 2009, 118-120; 2013, 205-208).

¹⁹³ SZRI I, Vol. I, chapter 7, No 62-64: 5a.

Similar to the Buriats, the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy also emphasized their connections with the imperial court. Particularly, in case of disputes with any of the different governmental bodies, be it locally or in St. Petersburg, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity frequently referred to their right to follow Buddhism that was granted to them by the 1847 Provision, as well as other rights granted to them by previous emperors.¹⁹⁴ This description also echoes the relationship of Tibetan Buddhism with the Mongol rulers. One could say that the *sangha* envisaged their relationship with the Tsar in much the same way as Phagpa viewed his relationship with Qubilai khan, or the way in which Sonam Gyatso viewed his with Altan khan: following the “patron-priest” model in which secular and religious authorities are closely – and to an extent symbiotically – related.

The fact that the Russian emperor was Orthodox was not an issue. Indeed, Buddhist political theology stipulates that a non-Buddhist ruler can obtain the highest religious authority if he takes over the regulation of “religious purity”, as this proves his adherence to the highest Buddhist values (Agadzhanian 2005, 351-352). The Russian autocrats were drawn into the Buddhist realm by depicting them as an emanation of the *Bodhisattva*¹⁹⁵ White Tara (*Tsagan Dara Ekhe*), also known as the “mother of liberation”. From the reign of Catherine the Great onwards, Russian rulers were frequently referred to as White Tsars or White Khans (*Tsagan Khan*) (Schorkowitz 2001a, 283; Trepavlov 2007, 20-26). After all, as Kollmar-Paulenz (2014, 4-5) argued, by referring to the Russian emperors as emanations of the White Tara, the Buddhists were able to express their strong loyalty to the ruler and effectively integrated him and his territories into the traditionally Buddhist realm together with Mongolia, Tibet and China. On the other hand, Marlene Laruelle has a more pragmatic explanation: she argues that as a colonized people, Russia’s Buddhists had to produce the notion of White Tsar to “reckon with the political realities to which they had come to be subjected” (2008, 113-114). In any case, the notion of the White Tsar served its purpose to write the Russian Empire into the Buddhist realm.

¹⁹⁴ RGIA: 383: 14: 16571(1): 2a-2b.

¹⁹⁵ Refers to anyone who has generated a spontaneous wish and compassionate mind to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The Kalmyk endeavors to incorporate Russian rulers into the Buddhist realm can be traced through the use of particular terms. As such, Trepavlov (2007, 20-22), who examined the use of notions like White Tsar among various non-Russian peoples of the Empire, noted that the Kalmyks used this term to refer to the Tsar in seventeenth century official diplomatic correspondence. However, one must note that Trepavlov's conclusions regarding the Kalmyks were based solely on Russian language sources. Takehiko Inoue, who conducted a comparative analysis of eighteenth and early nineteenth century sources in Oirat-Kalmyk, however, specified that although present at various stages of Kalmyk history, the notion of White Tsar was not as predominant among the Kalmyks as it was among the Buriats. Inoue (2013, 5-9) argued that the Kalmyks referred to Russian rulers as both "White Tsar" and "emperor". Furthermore, Inoue noted that the term "emperor" was frequently complemented with an adjective "*gegen*" which means "righteous and pure", acknowledging the divine nature of the Russian autocrat. When examining nineteenth century Oirat-Kalmyk sources of a later date, I also found that the Kalmyks used both terms – "White Tsar" and "emperor".¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, I should add that the divine nature of the Russian autocrat was also ascribed to him by complementing the term "emperor" with the word "*boqdo*" which means as much as "holy", "majestic", and "majesty" (Pozdneev 1911, 130; Ramstedt 1935, 49).

A well-documented and famous attempt to link the Russian imperial family to the Buddhist realm concerns *bagshi* Dambo Ul'ianov's interpretation of a Buddhist prophecy he discovered during his travels to Tibet in 1903-1904. The book *Predskazanie Buddy o Dome Romanovykh* [Buddha's Prediction about the House of the Romanovs], containing Ul'ianov's account of this prophecy along with his interpretation, was published in 1913 very in time for the Tercentenary of the House of the Romanovs.. The prophecy stated that somewhere to the north of the Himalayas there is a place called Shambala, that is governed by a virtuous ruler or *Chakravartin* where Buddhism flourishes (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 114-122). In her study

¹⁹⁶ NARK: I-1: 1: 188: 29a-32b; NARK: I-42: 1: 1: 3a-3b; NARK: I-42:1: 4: 70a-73a; NARK: I-42: 1: 16: 27a; RGIA: 383: 29: 18: 71a-75b.

of different conceptualizations of and ideas on Shambala, Kollmar-Paulenz noted that the idea of Shambala was frequently utilized for political reasons (1992-1993, 86-87). Indeed, Shambala is described as a materially wealthy place with spiritually highly advanced inhabitants, which according to Kollmar-Paulenz combines the ideas of El Dorado, the place of everlasting material wealth and Eden, spiritual heaven on earth (Kollmar-Paulenz 1992-1993, 79-86).

According to *bagshi* Ul'ianov's interpretation of the Buddhist prophecy, the mythical Buddhist kingdom of Shambala was situated in the European part of Russia with Moscow as its capital (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 114-122). Ul'ianov's interpretation of the prophecy also ascribed divine characteristics and origins to Tsar Nicholas II and the Russian rulers that preceded him, which supposedly pointed to them being Buddhist *Chakravatin* and *Bodhisattvas*. He writes: "Russia is the state, where Buddha found his living embodiment" (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 114). One could argue that Ul'ianov's book was an example of utilizing the concept of Shambala for political reasons. After all, the incorporation of Russian emperors into the Buddhist realm became even more prominent exactly at the end of the nineteenth – early twentieth century. Indeed, in this period, elites, both Buddhist and otherwise, made use of the Russian emperor's allegedly divine connection to the Buddhist world to legitimize the Empire's political interests in Inner Asia (Laruelle 2008, 113-115, Schorkowitz 2001a, 283).¹⁹⁷

Bagshi Ul'ianov's interpretation of a Buddhist prophecy about Shambala is one of many examples of the Kalmyk *sangha's* attempts to write the Russian emperors into the Buddhist realm. Indeed, the official recognition as one of the empire's tolerated religions allowed the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* to project the image of a priest-patron relationship onto the Kalmyk *sangha's* relationship with Russian autocrats. Embracing the status, as one of Russia's tolerated religions, the Kalmyk *sangha* took on the function of "priests", and extended the position of a "patron" to the Russian rulers. The Kalmyk *sangha* regularly organized religious services for the emperor and the rest of the imperial family. These Buddhist services were performed in honor of coronations, birthdays, wakes, births, and

¹⁹⁷ The role of the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity in Russia's foreign policy is explored in more details in Chapter 6.

birthdays of imperial family members; as well as for important events, such as, for example, the abolishment of serfdom.¹⁹⁸ Although sometimes, the decree to conduct a Buddhist service came from the secular authorities, frequently, the Lama of the Kalmyk people and other high-ranking members of the *sangha* organized special prayers for the imperial family of their own accord. For example, in 1855 Lama Dordzhi-Arakba ordered all *bagshis* to perform a seven-day prayer devoted to the coronation of Tsar Alexander II. The Lama also organized a feast for the people in his *ulus* devoted to the coronation, and reported about it to the Ministry of the State Properties.¹⁹⁹ On April 4th, 1866 after Alexander II survived the assassination attempt, the Lama of the Kalmyk People ordered a prayer which should be conducted annually to commemorate the event.²⁰⁰

Buddhist rituals were also performed on occasions when the government introduced certain important reforms. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter 2, a Buddhist ritual was performed for the health and longevity of the emperor and the imperial family in 1822, when the imperial administration gathered the Kalmyks at Jinjil to reform the existing code of laws.²⁰¹ In another instance, in 1892 in Iki-Derbet *ulus*, the Kalmyk *sangha* performed a grand Buddhist ceremony in Bashanta *khurul* prior to the announcement of the 1892 reform that emancipated Kalmyk commoners from serfdom and reformed the Kalmyk administration (L'vovskii 1894, 13). On the one hand, these Buddhist rituals blessed the reforms and provided a sense of legitimacy to the government's decisions; and on the other hand, the *sangha* performed their function of priest and expressed their readiness to serve the secular powers-that-be.

¹⁹⁸ NARK: I-9: 5: 2084: 2a; RGIA: 381: 8: 379: 1a.

¹⁹⁹ NARK: I-42: 1: 47: 8a-8b.

²⁰⁰ NARK: I-7: 4: 122: 1a-1b.

²⁰¹ NARK: I-1: 1: 188: 29b.



Figure 2. Photograph of a Buddhist Ritual in the Kalmyk Steppe. Courtesy of the National Museum of the Republic of Kalmykia.

Another strategy to draw the imperial family but also Russian lands into the Buddhist realm was through naming Buddhist monasteries after important historical events and members of the imperial family. In order to express his gratitude to the emperor who bestowed privileges and mercy onto the Kalmyks, in 1835 Baga-Tsokhur Lama Tsoi Arakba decided to construct a *khurul* where the prayers were specifically conducted for the well-being of the emperor and the whole dynasty. Furthermore, according to official sources Lama Tsoi Arakba financed the construction of this *khurul* with his own personal funds.²⁰² Furthermore, throughout the nineteenth century the Kalmyk clergy erected Buddhist monasteries with such names as: “Nikolaevan” (Rus.: Николаев) *khurul*, “Hundred-Years-

²⁰² RGIA: 383: 29: 139: 1a-1b.

Commemoration of the Great War”²⁰³ (Rus.: в Память о Столетие Великой Войны) *khurul* and “In Honor of the Late Tsar Alexander III” (Rus.: в Честь в Боз Почившего Царя Александра Второго) *khurul* in Baga-Derbet *ulus*, and “Three-Hundred-Years of the House of the Romanovs” (Rus.: в Честь Трехсотлетия Рода Романовых) *khurul* in Iki-Derbet *ulus* were all constructed in the Kalmyk steppes.²⁰⁴

While the Buddhist political theory that considers the support of political elites to be a prerequisite for spreading *Dharma* might to a certain extent explain the Kalmyk *sangha*’s desire to express their devotion to the Russian autocrat, however, it was not necessarily the only reason. After all, the instrumental nature of the relationship between the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and the Russian government was by no means one-directional. As much as the Russian government would call upon the services of the *sangha* when needed, so did the *sangha* have its ways of using their relationship with the state to their own ends. In other words, displays of loyalty were not only driven by theological doctrine, yet also by the monks’ own agendas.

By expressing their loyalty to the imperial family and their support of imperial policies, the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy not merely fulfilled its duties as a recognized tolerated body of non-Orthodox clergy. Many of the displays of loyalty and devotion to the emperor and his family could also be viewed as having a hidden agenda. For instance, naming and renaming *khuruls* after the imperial family or important historical events would not only provide a sense of legitimacy but also allow the monks to bypass certain restrictions. As such, the Kalmyks of the Iki-Dokmanzhin community were allowed to restore the Rashi-Sembo *khurul* that was closed in 1856, by calling it “Hundred-Years-Commemoration of the Great War” *khurul* despite the fact that it would exceed the sanctioned quota.²⁰⁵

The Kalmyk *sangha* and especially the Lamas strove to establish direct contact with the emperor as well as the Ministers of State Properties and the Interior who were in charge

²⁰³ Also known as Khoshut *khurul*. This is the only *khurul* that partially survived the Soviet anti-religious policies.

²⁰⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 2326: 1a-2a, 36a; OR RNB: 146: 107; RGIA: 1291: 85: 230: 1a-3a.

²⁰⁵ NARK: I-9: 5: 2326: 1a-2a, 36a.

of Kalmyk Buddhist affairs to be able to influence certain decisions. For instance, in February 1854, having recently been confirmed in the post of the Lama of the Kalmyk People, Lama Gelik had an audience with Emperor Nicholas I to personally express his gratitude for the honor bestowed on him. The Tsar generously rewarded Lama Gelik with a golden Anna medal, and the Lama's companions – *emchi* Arshi of the Iki-Tokhur *ulus*, *gelong* Basardyk from Iandyk *ulus*, and *manzhi* Malyshta from Kharakhus *ulus*, and interpreter Iolder Dzhimbaev from Erketen *ulus* received golden and silver gifts.²⁰⁶ At the same time, Lama Gelik used his visit to St. Petersburg to ask for an increase in his annual salary and the permission to construct the new *khurul* mentioned in Chapter 3.

Presenting a gift to the emperor or making a contribution to the state was not only an honor but an opportunity to receive a gift or a service in return.²⁰⁷ The appreciation or a physical gift from the emperor would greatly increase one's chances of being promoted within the Buddhist religious hierarchy or receiving exemption of certain rules in the future – not to mention the admiration of the Kalmyk and Russian elites and commoners alike. At the end of the nineteenth century, *getsul* Ledzhin Khodzregorov presented Emperor Nicholas II with two horses from his own herd in honor of the latter's coronation.²⁰⁸ The same *getsul* also requested and was allowed to put a prayer yurt in the Second Large Chonkorling *khurul* to pray for the emperor and the imperial family.²⁰⁹ Such an outright expression of loyalty did not go unnoticed, and soon the Chief Curator advised the Lama to promote Ledzhin Khodzregorov from *getsul* to *gelong*.²¹⁰ On the one hand, it was an honor for Ledzhin Khodzregorov to personally present horses to the emperor; on the other hand, this played to his advantage in the matter of his promotion. Additionally, opening a prayer yurt for the imperial family at his own expense got him a personal prayer house in the *khurul*.

²⁰⁶ RGIA: 383: 16: 20099:2b-4b. See also Schorkowitz 2018, 87-88.

²⁰⁷ NARK: I-9: 5: 2084: 2a.

²⁰⁸ NARK: I-9: 5: 802: 1a-4b.

²⁰⁹ RGIA: 1291: 85: 217: 1a-4b.

²¹⁰ NARK: I-9: 5: 965: 2a-6a.

An article in the same vein appeared in a St. Petersburg newspaper in 1916 that praised the Kalmyks of Stavropol Governorate for their contribution to the war.²¹¹ The article underscores in particular the contribution of the Kalmyk *sangha* and specifically mentions *bagshi* Sharap Badminov of the “Three-Hundred-Years of Romanov’s House” *khurul*. On January 31st, 1916 *bagshi* Badminov was invited to the imperial palace to receive gratitude for his contribution from the Empress herself. Using this opportunity, while in St. Petersburg, *bagshi* Badminov also petitioned the governor of Stavropol count Sergei D. Obolenski to assist him in attaining the position of chief *bagshi* of Iki-Derbet *ulus*.²¹² This was not *bagshi* Badminov’s first time meeting the Tsar, as in January 1911 he was one of the members of the Kalmyk clergy’s delegation led by chief *bagshi* Dordzhi Setenov of the Iki-Derbet *ulus* (Schorkowitz 2018, 282-283).

It is important to note that the monks who enjoyed the support of the local Russian administration and government because of their services to the state were not always appreciated by the Lama of the Kalmyk People. On the contrary, the Lama actively opposed the government’s and administration’s attempts to reward these monks for their “services to the state”. In the case of Ledzhin Khodzhigorov, the Lama refused to promote him to the rank of staff *gelong* out of turn, arguing that no services to the state will allow one to jump the queue. The same happened to Sharap Badminov’s request to become chief *bagshi*. The Lama refused to appoint him, arguing that Sharap Badminov lacked the necessary religious knowledge, and that his contribution to the war was no more than his duty as a subject of the emperor.²¹³

The coronations of Russian emperors represented important opportunities for quid pro quo exchanges: for the emperor – to show the greatness and diversity of his domain; and for the Kalmyk *sangha* to reinforce the patronage and acknowledgment of Buddhism in Russia. In 1896 clergymen of different “foreign confessions” were invited to attend the coronation

²¹¹ Ibid.: 2a-6a.

²¹² GASK: 249: 2: 2467: 12a.

²¹³ Ibid.: 13a-13b.

of Nicholas II.²¹⁴ Lama Bara-Shara Mandzhiev ordered master Morozov to make an expensive silver bowl to congratulate the emperor on his coronation.²¹⁵ The gift was reciprocated by Nicholas II, who sent a small silver medal to Lama Mandzhiev, and awarded the other members of the Kalmyk delegation that attended the coronation – *noyon* Tumen, Ledzhinov, a commoner, and the interpreter, Lidzhi Dzhemov.²¹⁶

In summary, the Kalmyk *sangha* had a multifaceted relationship with secular authorities in the Russian Empire. Firstly, the Kalmyk *sangha* incorporated the Russian emperors and empresses into the Buddhist realm on the basis of Buddhist political theory. This sacralization of the Russian autocrats fits the pattern of the archetypical Buddhist “patron-priest” relationship whereby the secular authorities patronize the sangha and the sangha in turn legitimizes the authorities’ power over its subjects. Secondly, as we have seen, at times, the Kalmyk *sangha* saw opportunities to instrumentalize this relationship to serve their own agenda. By engaging in gift giving and exalting the emperor’s rule, members of the sangha would elicit valuable gifts enhancing their status in the community or even circumvent certain rules which would otherwise restrict their activities.

After examining the Kalmyk *sangha*’s strategies to legitimize and sacralize the authority of the Russian autocrats, and how this opened up new opportunities, I move on to the question of the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy.

4.2. Empire and Kalmyk Buddhist Monastic Economy: *Shabi*, Accountability and Payroll

This section explores the impact which the incorporation into the Russian Empire’s administrative and legal framework had on the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy. As such,

²¹⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 812: 50a-51a.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 46a-48a.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 67a.

I focus on three main issues: the abolishment of the *shabiner* estate, the monasteries' financial accountability, and the establishment of new economic relations.

According to Buddhist precepts, when entering the monastic order, ideally, a monk must give up working for a living and rely on the support of the laity. This arrangement allows the *sangha* to focus on Buddhist practices, while providing the laity with a chance to accumulate merit (Wijayaratna 1990, 58-60). Although monastic rules generally discourage interactions between the laity and *sangha* beyond direct religious purposes, as noted by other research, the complete cessation of these relationships was frequently complicated by different economic and institutional factors (Goldstein 2010, 3-6; Jansen 2014, 146-149; Mills 2003, 65-72).

Historical sources indicate that in nineteenth century Russia, the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha's* relationship with the mundane world also greatly diverged from the Buddhist ideal. As in the case with Buddhist monasteries elsewhere, Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries and *sangha* accumulated large estates and significant levels of wealth. The Kalmyk *sangha* engaged in economic activities by selling livestock and other possessions that were donated to them.²¹⁷ Archival sources attest to the great variety of the Kalmyk *sangha's* private possessions and properties. For example, *gelong* Tsurum Denzin from Baga-Tsokhor *ulus* had twenty-two horses, *gelong* Gelik from Kharakhus *ulus* had ten horses and twenty-five camels, *gelong* Tsurum Dordzhi from Khoshut *ulus* had thirty horses and ten camels.²¹⁸ Expensive clothing, luxurious furnishings and other valuables could all be found among the personal belongings of members of the *sangha* (Gratsianskii 1880, 578-579).²¹⁹ Ethnographer Irodion Zhitetskii observed that the “majority of the clergy are wealthy people and, in general, the Kalmyk clergy are much wealthier than the Kalmyk masses” (1893: 56). Indeed, professor Konstantin Golstunskii called the Kalmyk monks “elegant dandies”.²²⁰

²¹⁷ NARK: I-9: 5: 1891: 4, 7a-7b, 10a, 17a-18b; OR RNB: 590: 146: 43a, 52a.

²¹⁸ NARK: I-42: 1: 4: 9b.

²¹⁹ GAAO: 1099: 1: 2: 9a-10a.

²²⁰ AV: 60: 1: 5: 14b, 19b: элегантные франты.

The wealth of Buddhist monasteries and the clergy frequently presented certain challenges for the government. In his study of the transformation of Buddhist economic ethics in medieval China, Gregory Ornatawski (1996, 217) mentioned that the substantial losses of tax revenues and labor forces caused by the increase in monks and tax-free monastic lands, left the Chinese emperor with no choice but to plug the gap in the empire's finances by seizing monastic endowments and forcibly returning monks to peasant life. Michael Aung-Thwin (1979, 672) also noted the economic dimension in the state-initiated *sangha* reform in Burma, where large numbers of *sangha*, as well as their tax-exempted land and exemption from labor services drained the state treasury. Similar to imperial China and Burma, in the Russian Empire, the wealth and proliferation of the Buddhist monasteries and *sangha* also had a negative impact on revenues from Kalmyk lands for the imperial treasury. As we discussed in Chapter 3, to address this situation, the Russian imperial government forcibly reduced the number of Buddhist monks and monasteries.²²¹

Incorporation of Kalmyk Buddhism into the Russian Empire's administrative and legal framework presented a great opportunity not merely to make Kalmyk Buddhism more legible, but also to further the Empire's economic interests. These government policies were bound to have an impact on the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy. In addition to reducing the number of Buddhist monasteries and monks, hence increasing the number of tax-paying subjects, the imperial government also transformed the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy by abolishing the so-called *shabiner* estate.

Shabiner (also *shabinar*, *shabi* or *shevener*) is a term that can be translated as "disciple" but came to refer to "an ecclesiastic serf" (Bawden 1968, 14; Nefed'ev 1834, 100; Strakhov 1810, 25). In his study of Mongolian quasi-feudalism, Jagchid noted that the history of *shabiner* goes back to the late sixteenth century. According to Sechin Jagchid (1974: 42), there were three origins of *shabiner* among the Mongols. The first originated with the tradition of noble families providing their ordained sons with servants. The second began with lay noblemen donating some of the people nomadizing with them and their entourage to be

²²¹ NARK: I-42: 1: 14: 10b; RGIA: 383: 14: 16571 (1): 3b, 45b-46a; RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 17a.

shabiner. A third origin was commoners voluntarily asking to become *shabiner* to a lama or monastery because their duties would be lighter than those of ordinary people.

A biography of Zaya-Pandita already mentions that he had a great number of *shabiner* (Radnabhadra Rymiantsev and Sazykin 1999, 75, 80, 85-86, 88, 90, 95-96). After the Kalmyks settled in the Caspian steppe, the *shabiner* estate continued to exist. In the Kalmyk Khanate the Kalmyk aristocracy were often donating large numbers of Kalmyk commoners to monasteries and to the *sangha*, hoping to earn merit for the afterlife (Nefed'ev 1834, 100; Strakhov 1810, 25-26). Furthermore, in order to escape military duties and high taxes, commoners frequently sought to become *shabiner* (Batyrov 2011, 43). Schorkowitz (1992, 412) argued that the growth of the monasteries' wealth was not so much a result of donations by the nobility but of the increasingly impoverished Kalmyk population seeking to become *shabiner* to escape the secular dependencies and to be freed from military service.

Shabinar could be divided into two types: *lamain shabinar* – those who belonged to lamas and *khurul shabinar* – those who belonged to the Buddhist monasteries (Nefed'ev 1834, 100). However, this division was rather blurry, as both types of *shabiner* performed duties for both monasteries and monks, and after the death of their monk-owner, *shabiner* were inherited by the monastery (Dordzhieva 1980, 10; Karagodin 1977, 38-39; Nebolsin 1852, 20). Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries and *sangha* relied on *shabiner* for labor: *shabiner* took care of livestock, cleaned and provided food (Nefed'ev 1834, 18). Since *shabiner* were regarded as property of Buddhist monasteries and *sangha*, they were either completely or partially exempt from duties and services to the nobility, and instead had to provide their services and pay taxes to monasteries or the *sangha* (Schorkowitz 1992, 280).²²²

The abolishment of the *shabiner* estate did not happen overnight. Rather it was to be an incremental process of change that started in the early nineteenth century and culminated in outright prohibition by the Russian imperial government in 1834. According to Karagodin (1977, 41-42), sometime in the early nineteenth century the practice of noblemen donating

²²² RGIA: 383: 10: 9364: 7a-7b

new *shabiner* all but disappeared. Furthermore, at the 1822 Jinjil Assembly – a gathering of Kalmyk nobility, Buddhist clergymen and Russian officials – the Kalmyk Buddhist clergymen were ordered to hand over their *shabiner* to the property of *khuruls* or their relatives who did not have monastic status (Leontovich, 1880, 15). Karagodin argues that there were several reasons for the disappearance of this traditional practice – among them we find “the policies of the Russian government which were aimed at the abolishment of the *shabiner* estate” (1977: 41-42). Specifically, he argues that the Russian government had an interest in depriving the *sangha* of the economic means which decreased the monks’ political and economic influence over the commoners in the *uluses*. In the end it was the 1834 Provision which officially abolished the *shabiner* estate once and for all. Though retaining their name, *shabiner* were withdrawn from the control of Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* and monasteries and equated with other Kalmyk commoners.²²³

Such direct interference into what could be viewed as an internal matter of Kalmyk Buddhism instigated a number of complaints. Both the members of the *shabiner* estate and the *sangha* petitioned the government to allow at least some *shabiner* to retain their previous status.²²⁴ Despite these petitions, government officials stood by their decision. The Minister of State Properties in his responses to Lama Dzhinzan clearly defined the government’s position towards the issue. The Minister stressed two points: restoring the duty-exempt status of *shabiner* would be “damaging to the treasury and burdening the Kalmyks of other clans”; and would contradict the existing regulation that prohibits Buddhist clergy’s interference in secular affairs.²²⁵

Thereby, the abolishment of the *shabiner* estate had economic and political implications for both the Russian Empire and the Kalmyk *sangha*. Economically speaking, similarly to reduction of number of monasteries and monks, the abolishment of the *shabiner* would increase the empire’s tax revenues, while undermining economic prosperity of the

²²³ NARK: I-42: 1: 35: 2a.

²²⁴ NARK: I-42: 1: 32: 2a-2b; RGIA: 383: 10: 9364: 8a-9a; RGIA: 383: 14: 16577: 8a-21a.

²²⁵ RGIA: 383: 10: 9364: 10a: ущербным для казны и обременением калмыкам других родов.

Buddhist monasteries that could no longer rely on free labor. Politically speaking, by equating the *shabiner* with the rest of the Kalmyk commoners, the Russian regime removed the *shabiner* from the jurisdiction of Buddhist monasteries and *sangha*, thus further cutting Buddhist clergy out of secular affairs; meanwhile together with the *shabiner* the *sangha* lost part of its influence over the Kalmyks. It is also necessary to note that only in 1861 the Russian government formally abolished serfdom as it was practiced in most of Russia.

It should be noted that after being freed from their obligations towards the Kalmyk *sangha* and *khuruls*, and being thus equated with the rest of the Kalmyk commoners, *shabiner* continued to exist in name. Much of the existing research agrees that *shabiner* underwent a transformation from a social estate to an ethnic group (Avliaev 1974, 142; Bakaeva 2007, 59; Batyrev 2014, 101). However, what has, yet, to be spelled out, is that it was the Russian government's interference in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs that facilitated and contributed to this transformation.

The second change that the incorporation into Russia's administrative and legal systems had on the Buddhist monastic economy concerned financial accountability. As such, prior to the inclusion of Kalmyk Buddhism into Russia's multiconfessional establishment, the Buddhist monasteries did not keep records of received donations. However, the 1834 Provision stipulated that the Buddhist monasteries and *sangha* must account for received donations and their annual expenses. According to the new regulations, the LSGB – and after it was abolished the Lama of the Kalmyk People²²⁶ – was to collect an annual report from the *bagshis* and present it to the Astrakhan Governor and the Ministry of Interior.²²⁷

The reports available to us indicate that the monasteries' donations came mostly in the form of livestock; while money and clothes were second and third most common. The total amount of annual donations of all monasteries' in one *ulus* varied from one to several thousand rubles, and annual expenses of the monasteries' were almost always equal to the

²²⁶ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 357.

²²⁷ PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 28; PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 367.

received donations.²²⁸ After thoroughly examining these financial reports, I must conclude that after the legislation that required monasteries to submit mandatory financial records, the annual income of the monasteries' showed a steady annual decrease; expenses once again being almost equal to the income.²²⁹ Then the question arises: was this decrease in annual income following the introduction of the new rule a mere coincidence, or were *bagshis* deliberately concealing and underreporting the monasteries' income? There are two important factors which point to the possibility that the *bagshis* may have been purposefully underreporting the monasteries' revenues. Firstly, despite clear orders from the LSGB, the annual reports did not differentiate between the two types of donations: received by the *sangha* and by the monasteries. Secondly, as we know from Zhitetskii (1893, 54), the income received from donations and payments for religious services was traditionally divided into three shares: the first was received by the monk who received the donation or performed the religious service, the second share was divided between the remaining monks, and the final share was put into the common monastery treasury. Therefore, it is entirely possible that the monasteries only accounted for the income received in the monastery treasury, but excluded the shares that were divided among the monks.

Kurapov (2018, 177) argued that the establishment of the LSGB allowed the regional authorities to fulfil one of the main goals of incorporating the Kalmyk lands and people: namely to control the financial flows between different strata of Kalmyk "society". However, although I would agree that imperial law did, indeed, compel the LSGB and the Lama to collect records of received donations and financial activities, this record keeping could hardly be classified as "control of financial flows". In fact, we know from archival sources that the quality and contents of these financial records did not satisfy the Kalmyk Administration. The Kalmyk Administrative Council and the Chief Curator complained that the LSGB's reports did not provide data regarding the source and nature of the donations received by *khuruls*.²³⁰ However, regardless of the quality of monasteries' financial reports, they, nevertheless,

²²⁸ NARK: I-42: 1: 17: 4a-10a, 18a.

²²⁹ Ibid.; NARK: I-42: 7: 11b.

²³⁰ NARK: I-42: 1: 37: 1a- 3b.

illustrate a certain change to the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy. After all, the monasteries previously did not keep record of or account for received donations.

In striving for a greater legibility of Kalmyk Buddhism, the imperial authorities established a new type of economic relationship. As was discussed in Chapter 3, to ensure the loyalty of the LSGB and the Lama – who were in charge of overseeing and managing the rest of the *sangha* – the government introduced annual payments.²³¹ Thereby, the Lama and other monks of the LSGB entered into a new type of economic relationship: they became imperial state officials, while technically remaining Buddhist monks who were supposed to renounce their worldly connections. This new type of economic relationship further undermined the Buddhist archetype of monks as “men who abstain from worldly things”.

Put briefly, the introduction of payments for the LSGB members and the Lama which turned them into remunerated state officials, the abolishment of the *shabiner* estate and the authorities’ demands regarding the *sangha*’s financial accountability, all these measures served to transform the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy.

4.3. A Buddhist Monk for Justice: The *Gelong*-Commissioner for Oaths

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the 1834 and 1847 Provisions aimed to clearly define the rights and responsibilities of the Kalmyk *sangha* while limiting their authority over secular matters. The Kalmyk Buddhist clergymen’s involvement in judicial affairs was a particular concern for the government. Indeed, the 1825, 1834, and 1847 legislations all included provisions explicitly prohibiting the Kalmyk *sangha* from interfering in judicial matters, except for marital and family disputes.²³² However, despite the clear prohibition by imperial law, regional and local administrations often required the Buddhist clergy’s assistance in performing certain judicial and administrative tasks beyond marital and family disputes.

²³¹ PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 39.

²³² PSZ I, Vol.40 (1825), No. 30290: 159; PSZ II, Vol. 10, (1835), No 7560a: 27-28; PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 365-367.

The status of an officially tolerated religion meant that the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy was to follow the example of long-established relations between the Empire and the Orthodox Church. This also meant taking on similar responsibilities that among the Russian Orthodox population was performed by Orthodox priests. This meant not merely to serve the Kalmyks' religious needs, but also to assist the imperial government. One of the main tasks for which the local administration required the Buddhist clergy's assistance was to administer oaths. Indeed, Russian imperial law stipulated that every person who was about to take an official post was obliged to pledge an oath of allegiance to the Russian emperor.²³³ As noted by the Ministry of Interior's Department of Foreign Confessions Vashkevich (1885, 76-77) for non-Orthodox people this oath was to be administered by the cleric of their faith in accordance with their religious traditions and rituals. Furthermore, section 5, paragraph 2 of the 1847 Provision, entitled "On legal proceedings in *Ulus Zargo*", stipulated that "the oath of Kalmyk plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses is to be performed according to the customs of the Lamaist faith".²³⁴

When assigning the tasks of administering oaths, the government thus projected the image and concepts of the Orthodox Church onto the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*. In 1848, as the official head of the Kalmyk Buddhist "church", the Lama of the Kalmyk People was ordered to write Kalmyk Buddhist oaths that were to be used in every *ulus*. Regarding an oath that could be used in court proceedings for plaintiffs, witnesses and defendants, Chief Curator Mikhail Ivanovich Tagaichinov stressed in his letter to Lama Dzhinzan, that since this oath "will be used in cases regarding theft, murder and other severe crimes and disputes, [...] the oath must contain the whole strength of fear of lying or speaking lies for someone else's benefit".²³⁵ The Lama presented the following oath:

"In front of your image, I witness the truth about what I know, saw and hear, without hiding anything, neither for friendship, enmity, vengeance or fear of the powerful. To you the

²³³ SZRI I, Vol. 3, chapter 4, No 180: 44.

²³⁴ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 362: О судопроизводстве в Улусных Зарго.

²³⁵ NARK: I-7: 4: 39: 2a-2b: имеет быть употребляема впредь при следственных делах: о краже, смертоубийстве, и при других тяжбных делах и спорах, [...] присяга должна заключать в себе всю силу страха говорить ложно или поддерживать не справедливо в чью то нибудо пользу выдуманное.

Judge who knows friendship and enmity, virtue and vice, truth and lies, if I purge myself in front of You, who is unmistakably omniscient, then let my tongue be taken away, my body cast into hell and my soul in future lives given to the khan of infernal spirits and sent to eternally burning hell. In conclusion of my oath, I place Your image onto my head and bow to You, all-mighty Buddha” .²³⁶

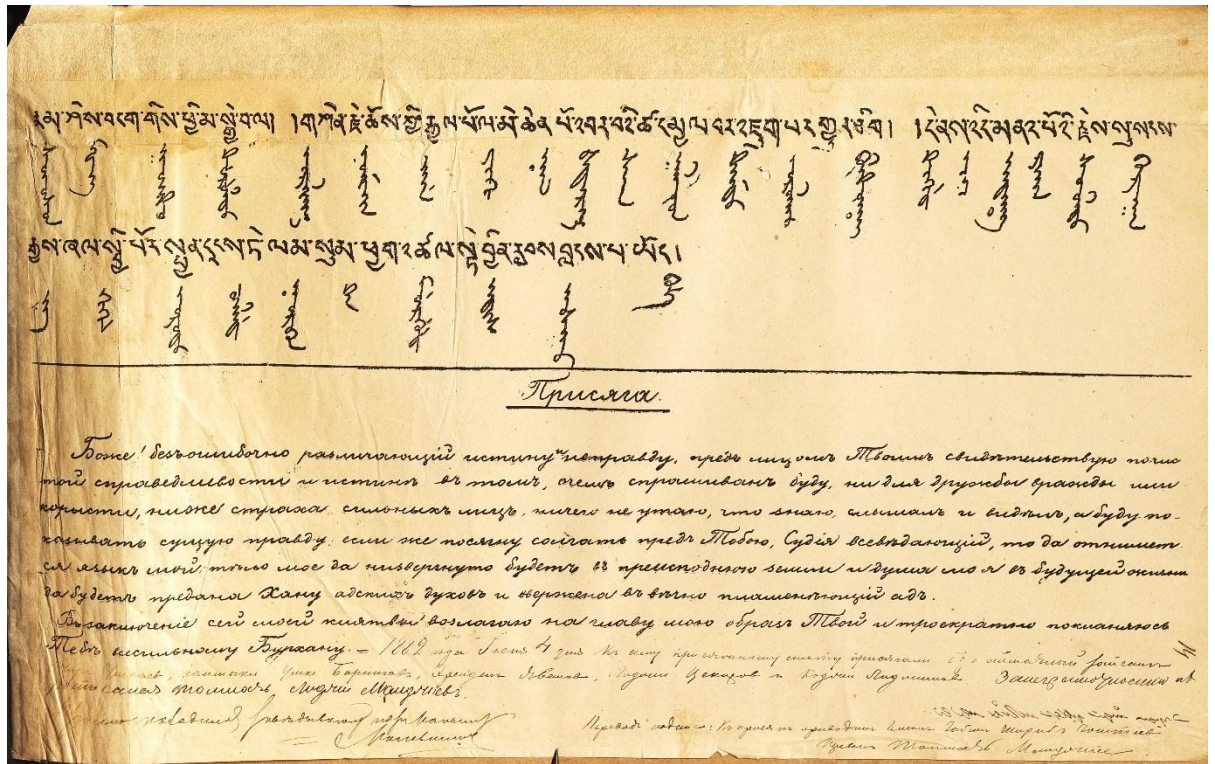


Figure 3. Copy of the Oath for Plaintiffs, Witnesses and Defendants in Oirat and Russian Languages. NARK: I-15: 1: 571: 14.

²³⁶ NARK: I-7: 4: 39: 6a-8b: Боже безошибочно различающий истину и неправду, пред лицом Твоим свидетельствую почистой справедливости и истине в том, счем спрашивать буду, ни для дружбы вражды или корысти, ниже страха сильных лиц, ничего не утаю, что знаю, слышал и видел, а буду показывать сущую правду: если же посягну солгать пред Тобою, Судья всеведающих, то да отнимется язык мой тело моё да низвергнуто будет в преисподню земли и душа моя в будущей жизни да будет предана Хану адских духов и ввержена в вечно пламенеющий ад. По заключению сей моей клятвы возлагаю на главу мою обар Твой и простираю покланяюсь Тебе всеильному Бурхану.

Following the legal procedure, the Chief Curator sent the oath to the Minister of State Properties Kiselev for confirmation.²³⁷ Minister Kiselev, in his turn found the oath “sufficient enough to instill in the pagan the importance of the oath that he is giving”.²³⁸ On June 16th, 1849 this oath was circulated to all *ulus* courts (*zargos*) and *ulus* administrations and curators.²³⁹ However, the oath formula raised also discord within the administration. Aleksandr Popov, professor for Mongolian language at Kazan University subjected the oath to a strict criticism, pointing out the Russian translation did not reproduce the exact number of passages in Kalmyk and that the order of passages in Kalmyk was distorted (Schorkowitz 2018, 66). The Kalmyk speaking officials Nikonov, Kondratiev and Pavlovskii who were responsible for the review agreed with Popov’s critique, but argued that the missing passages did not lead to any distortion of the meaning. Lama Dzhinzan opposed Popov’s corrections, arguing that they deteriorate the text and that Popov does not have a complete command of the Kalmyk language.²⁴⁰ In the end, the Department of Spiritual Affairs for Foreign Confessions (*Departament Dukhovnykh Del Inostrannykh Ispovedanii*) of the Ministry of Interior Affairs decided to request the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Aziiatskii Departament Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del*) to prepare an accurate translation of the oath from Russian into Kalmyk. The oath was to be sent to the Astrakhan Chamber of the Ministry of State Properties by September 18th, 1851.²⁴¹ However, Chief Curator Mikhail Aleksandrovich fon Gazenkampf pointed out that the latter either did not happen or did not reach the circulation, as the original oath formula suggested by the Lama remained unchanged and was in active use since the early 1850s throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁴²

Regarding the Kalmyk perception of the oath formula, it appears that the oath lacked its intended effect, making it difficult to elicit truthful information from Kalmyk witnesses,

²³⁷ RGIA: 383: 11: 10673: 1a-2b.

²³⁸ Ibid.: 3a-3b: достаточно внушающе язычнику важность клятвы его.

²³⁹ NARK: I-7: 4: 39: 15a-15b; RGIA: 1291: 85: 379: 3a.

²⁴⁰ RGIA: 383: 11: 10673: 15a.

²⁴¹ Ibid.: 18a-18b.

²⁴² NARK: I-15: 2: 393: 49a-49b, 207 a-207b; RGIA: 1291: 85: 379: 2a-2b.

plaintiffs, and defendants, thereby complicating the work of the *ulus* authorities. Parmen Smirnov ([1879] 1999, 141) observed on multiple occasions that during the oath ceremony, when the *gelong* reached the section of the formula invoking eternal suffering for dishonesty, the Kalmyks deliberately avoided pronouncing those particular words aloud. Upon inquiry as to why, one Kalmyk explained that “If I do not utter these words before the Buddha, I may reveal not what I truly know, but what is necessary for the case to acquit the accused. Or I may simply declare *medkishib* (I know nothing), even though I know much. And for this false testimony, I shall not be condemned to infernal suffering, as I did not speak those dreadful words before the Buddha”²⁴³ (Smirnov [1879] 1999, 141).

While I was able to find the exact oath used in the court proceedings for plaintiffs, witnesses and defendants, unfortunately, the sources containing the information regarding Buddhist services conducted for Kalmyk convicts are much more limited. Similar to Orthodox convicts, Kalmyk convicts, too, were entitled to receive the sacrament of confession before receiving a death sentence. Unfortunately, the available sources do not stipulate which exact ritual or mantra had been conducted or read on such occasions. However, I was able to find an example of a ritual used for Kalmyk convicts, in cases where there was no possibility to invite a Buddhist monk to administer the sacrament of confession. In 1853, the Astrakhan Governorate’s judicial department specifically asked the Lama, which prayer and confession might be used for Kalmyks who follow Buddhism in those places where it is difficult to call in an actual Buddhist monk to conduct service for the Kalmyk convicts.²⁴⁴ In response, the Lama said that there is only one prayer that might be suitable on this occasion, and it would have to be conducted no later than one day before the execution. As for the places where it is impossible to invite a Buddhist monk, a convict must show remorse, publicly kneeling and bowing to each of the four cardinal directions three times.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ “Если же я не произнесу этих слов перед бурханом, то могу показать и не то, что действительно знаю, а то, что нужно, по ходу дела для оправдания обвиняемого. Или просто скажу *медкишиб* (ничего не знаю), хотя бы многое знал! И за это неправильное показание не подвергнусь адским мучениям, потому что перед бурханом я этих страшных слов не произносил.”

²⁴⁴ NARK: I-42: 1: 48: 12a.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.: 1a.

Having prepared oaths and sacraments for convicts, the imperial administration introduced the post of a *gelong-commissioner for oaths* (Kalm.: *andayār bagshi*; Rus.: *prisiazhnyi geliung*) who was to perform these expected responsibilities. I have considered a number of possible titles for *andayār bagshi* or *prisiazhnyi geliung*. As he was responsible in court proceedings only for administering oaths by those appearing before the court in one capacity or another. The title of Commissioner for Oaths seemed most appropriate. We failed to find a similar, fitting title in the Russian administration as oaths were administered by Court Secretaries (*sekretar' suda*) or Scribes (*pisar*), yet these also used to perform a variety of other tasks like note-taking – a similar problem exists with Court Clerks in other European settings. Similarly, the term magistrate involves the idea of also performing judicial analyses, thus rendering the term inappropriate for our purposes here. In the 19th century English context, we find the specific role known as a "Commissioner for Oaths". These were officials authorized to administer oaths and affirmations in legal contexts, especially in relation to affidavits, depositions, and other written statements made for use in court.²⁴⁶ Considering the overlap between the described responsibilities and in spite of the clunkiness of the term, we chose this term.

Research revealed no equivalent in the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic hierarchy to the post of a *gelong-commissioner for oaths*. Furthermore, the 1834 and 1847 Provisions that legally defined Kalmyk Buddhism's hierarchical and institutional structure within the Russian Empire also make no mention of the post. However, notwithstanding the legal and customary traditions, the post of a *gelong-commissioner for oaths* was introduced in all Kalmyk *uluses*, and became one of the Kalmyk *sangha's* mandatory duties to the state.²⁴⁷ The introduction of the *gelong-commissioner for oaths* on the part of local administration also indicated the discrepancy between the goals of the central government and the everyday needs of the local administration. As such, while the central government aimed to reduce the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's interference in judicial matters, the local administration required the clergy's

²⁴⁶Commissioner for Oaths." Oxford Reference.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095627175>, accessed 18 Oct. 2020.

²⁴⁷ NARK: I-26: 1: 401: 50a.

assistance in resolving day-to-day administrative and judicial challenges faced by the local *ulus* administrations. The local administration demanded the constant presence of a *gelong-commissioner for oaths* in the *ulus* administration, hence the monks who occupied the post in question were forced to leave their monasteries and reside near the *ulus* headquarters. From the few sources that are available to us, I conclude that the post of *gelong-commissioner for oaths* rotated between the monasteries within one *ulus*.²⁴⁸ The term and schedule for occupying the post was decided by the chief *ulus bagshi* and varied between different *uluses*. For instance, in Mochagi *ulus* the *gelongs* rotated on a monthly basis.²⁴⁹

In addition to the aforementioned official tasks of commissioning oaths and administering confessions, in some cases, a *gelong-commissioner for oaths* also would teach Buddhism and conduct Buddhist services for Kalmyk children who studied in *ulus* schools – vernacular schools where Kalmyk children were to learn math, reading and writing in both Russian and Kalmyk. Although this specific task was beyond his official responsibilities, since *gelong-commissioner for oaths* were already residing in or near the *ulus* headquarters it was only logical that they would take on the responsibilities in *ulus* schools, instead of *khuruls* sending yet another monk to be away from the monastery.

The local administration often struggled to find Buddhist monks to fill the post of the *gelong-commissioner for oaths*. Performing duties for the imperial administration would have diverted a monk's attention from his religious practice, hence Buddhist monks would likely have found the post confusing and burdensome. Additionally, practical challenges contributed to the difficulty in finding a suitable *gelong* for the role. The chief *ulus bagshi* did not seem prioritize selecting the right monk for the post, resulting in multiple instances where monks assigned to the role were unable to fulfill their duties. For examples, Lidzhi Mukhaev, who arrived at the Baga-Derbet *ulus* headquarters, lacked his own yurt, hence was unable to reside near the *ulus* headquarters. Moreover, *gelong* Mukhaev could not read, write or sign his name. Consequently, unable to resolve the issue on their own, the Baga-Derbet *ulus*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 50a.

²⁴⁹ NARK: I-9: 1764: 8a-9a.

administration had to petition the Kalmyk Administration to assign a different Buddhist monk. In another instance, Dabdzhin Samdanov from Arashan-Gevelen Iki *khurul* neither had his own yurt nor received any subsistence from the *khurul* during his tenure. As a result, the Baga-Derbet *ulus* administration had to petition the Kalmyk Administration in Astrakhan and Lama Samtanov to provide a yurt for *gelong* Sadmanov, so he could reside near the *ulus* headquarters.²⁵⁰

The issue of subsistence for *gelong-commissioner for oaths* caused disagreement between the Buddhist clergy and the imperial administration. Officially the post of *gelong-commissioner for oaths* was not remunerated. Sometimes a *gelong-commissioner for oaths* would live off his own resources, yet over time, the responsibility of providing subsistence was placed on the Kalmyks living in each *ulus* and became an added financial burden.²⁵¹ However, in 1904, the *ulus* curators decided to cancel this duty on the ground that it was not authorized by the law. This made it increasingly difficult to find suitable candidates to fill the post, and the positions frequently remained vacant. The monks of the northern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus* began to refuse the post altogether. While in landyk *ulus*, the Baga *khurul* did send a monk to fill the post to the *ulus* headquarters, but stressed that this would be the last time they would do so.²⁵² In 1906 Lama Delgerkiev addressed the issue of subsistence for the *gelong-commissioner for oaths* and asked the Kalmyk Administration to provide an allowance for them in the northern part of the Baga-Derbet *ulus*. Lama Delgerkiev stressed that he was unable to force the Baga-Derbet *sangha* to perform the function of *gelong-commissioner for oaths*, and the *sangha* was refusing to do this job without receiving any allowance.²⁵³

As they needed a *gelong-commissioner for oaths* to adequately perform their judicial functions, the Kalmyk Administration promised to resolve the issue of remuneration. However, until the issue would be resolved the Kalmyk Administration emphasized in a letter to the Lama from January 30th, 1907 that it was “the Buddhist clergy’s responsibility to

²⁵⁰ NARK: I-26: 1: 401: 50a

²⁵¹ NARK: I-7: 4: 117: 8a-8b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1764: 1a-9a.

²⁵² NARK: I-9: 5: 1764: 1a-9a.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*: 1a.

administer oaths from the Kalmyks, following the demands of judicial and persecuting authorities, [...]. This responsibility must be fulfilled regardless of the *gelongs'* wishes. At Your disposal are sufficient means to make them, as individuals who are under Your direct subordination, carry out their responsibilities [...]."²⁵⁴ Following this letter, the Lama, indeed, announced to all *khuruls* that "under the threat of punishment, *gelongs* must not attempt to evade performing the authorities' demands" if chosen to serve as a *gelong-commissioner* for oaths.²⁵⁵

Unfortunately, the available sources do not contain information on whether the Lama's threat achieved its goal. On this note, one should once again mention the fragmentary nature of sources that touch upon the topic of *gelong-commissioner for oaths*, and the lack of previous works that studied or even mentioned this post. However, despite these challenges, I, nevertheless, have attempted to present as comprehensive an account as possible. After all, the examples of the new post of *gelong-commissioner for oaths* and the use of Buddhist oaths for the Russian imperial judicial and administrative needs perfectly illustrate the way in which Kalmyk Buddhist institutions were transformed in the process of interactions with the Russian imperial government. Having little knowledge of the specifics of the particular religion they were dealing with, Russian authorities assumed that other religions could perform the same functions as did the Orthodox Church, thus Kalmyk Buddhist clergymen were ascribed new functions and responsibilities.

4.4. Conclusion

As was mentioned in the outset, this chapter dealt with the transformation that occurred within the Kalmyk Buddhism's internal institutions as a result of the incorporation into the Russian Empire's administrative and legal systems. Buddhist political theory of

²⁵⁴ Ibid.: 10a-10b: приводить к присяге калмыков по требованию судебных и следственных властей составляет обязанность ламайского духовенства, [...] Обязанность эта должна быть исполяема независимо от желания гелюнгов и в Вашем распоряжении найдётся достаточно средств, чтобы заставить их, как лиц, находящихся в непосредственном Вашем подчинении, нести свои обязанности аккуратно.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.: 10b: под страхом ответственности, не уклонялись от исполнения требования властей.

kingship as an ideal form of government allowed the transformation of the image of the Russian autocrats from an alien Orthodox ruler into that of a benevolent ruler who was part of the Buddhist world. The “patron-priest” relationship model is apt to understand the relationship between the Russian Empire’s political authorities and the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. The *sangha* sacralized the power of the Russian emperors, ascribing to them a divine nature such as Bodhisattva White Tara; and this in turn provided legitimacy to the Russian ruler as he governed his Buddhist subjects. The Kalmyk *sangha* further stressed their affinity and loyalty to the Russian autocrats by building monasteries and performing rituals and prayers for the imperial family and important historical moments in the Empire’s history. At the same time, by including the Russian autocrats into the Buddhist realm and by stressing their affinity to the former created opportunities for the *sangha* to instrumentalize these relations for their own benefit.

While the Kalmyk *sangha* actively transformed the image of Russian autocrats to incorporate them into the Buddhist realm, some changes within Buddhist internal institutions occurred not because of the actions of Buddhist *sangha* but as a result of imperial policies. Indeed, the imperial policies that aimed at regulating Kalmyk Buddhism, at times, clashed with the *sangha*’s traditions and customs, thus causing certain transformations within Buddhist institutions. Government policies abolished the *shabiner* estate, demanded financial accountability of monasteries and monks, and put the Lama and the members of the LSGB onto the government payroll. At the same time, these changes were not necessarily centrally planned by the government in St. Petersburg, yet were at times, initiated by the local administration that required the assistance of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy in the day-to-day operation of civil courts, as was the case with the *gelong-commissioner* for oaths.

The changes made to the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic economy, as well as the creation of the new office of a *gelong-commissioner for oaths* both ascribed to the Kalmyk *sangha* new functions and responsibilities to fit the state’s needs and vision. Of course, there were as many attempts at working *around* the system as there were attempts at working *within* it. Some members of the *sangha* learnt how to navigate the new system, bargaining and

negotiating within the framework set up by the authorities to further their own interests. Others became a part of the bureaucracy, fulfilling functions they had never heard of prior to Buddhism's incorporation in Russia's multiconfessional establishment.

However significant these transformations might have been brought about by the Russian state, the transformative power was to be even more fundamental under the rise of nation-building sentiments among the Russian elite in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5. Reforming the Empire: Effects of Nation-State Building on Buddhist Monastic Education

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian government incorporated Kalmyk Buddhism into its administrative and legal systems. The 1834 and 1847 legislations aimed to create clear guidelines for rights, rules, and responsibilities of the Kalmyk *sangha*. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the new rules imposed on the Kalmyk *sangha*, to a certain degree, transformed Kalmyk Buddhist institutions. However, as we pointed out, the Kalmyk *sangha* was not passively undergoing these changes. They took part in negotiating, interpreting and even executing these reforms.

As the Russian Empire entered the second half of the nineteenth century, Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) strengthened the elite in their conviction to promote reforms and modernization as well as to increase the nation-building of the empire. In addition to economic, administrative and judicial reforms, the government put forward new initiatives that aimed at creating a more homogeneous society. This shift in imperial objectives from administration building to a more nation oriented society assumed that the government needed to further adjust the degree of legibility of its diverse subjects. To increase the degree of legibility included concrete attempts at assimilating the Kalmyk population, in this particular case – of the Kalmyk *sangha*.

After outlining Russia's reform policies for nation-state building, I will briefly discuss how this shift in objectives has impacted the Kalmyks. As such, I examine the changes introduced to the Kalmyk administrative and judicial systems, the activities of the Russian Orthodox mission, but also the reform initiatives that aimed at modifying the existing system of managing Kalmyk Buddhism and its clergy. In particular, this chapter focuses on describing and analyzing three major measures that targeted the Buddhist clergy. The first measure introduced a minimum age requirement for starting Buddhist monastic education. The second measure imposed Russian language requirements on the Kalmyks boys who wanted to begin their monastic education. And the third measure expanded these language requirements to already ordained Kalmyk *sangha*. In our analysis we will specifically pay

attention to how the measures in question affected Kalmyk Buddhist institutions and how we can characterize the Kalmyk *sangha's* agency while undergoing and participating in the measures' formulation and implementation.

5.1. The Great Reforms, Nationalism and “Foreign Confessions”

In 1856, the defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) revealed that the Empire lagged behind the rapidly modernizing and industrializing empires in the Western Europe. The flaws of military conscription, outdated equipment, lack of adequate infrastructure, and a serfdom-based economy made it impossible for Russia to compete with the joined forces of the Ottoman, French and British militaries. And in his attempt to modernize the state, Alexander II (1855-1881) initiated a series of reforms.

These so-called Great Reforms started with the abolishment of serfdom – which was deemed as the lynchpin of Russia's backwardness. On February 19th, 1861 an imperial order granted serfs civic status and instantly ended their personal dependence on the nobility (Zakharova 2006, 602). Yet, the liberation of millions of serfs freed also their masters from administrative, judicial and fiscal responsibilities, which hence required the state to take on these responsibilities. To address this demand, in 1864 the government established *zemstvo* assemblies, institutions of local self-government. The *zemstvo* assemblies were elected representative bodies that included three categories of people: townspeople, peasant communities, and individual landowners (Raeff 1984, 177). Despite the domination of the nobility, due to the fact that representation was proportional to land ownership, these local bodies of self-government, nevertheless, became an important platform where different groups dealt with issues of local governance (Chubarov 1999, 78-79). The same year, another reform modernized the existing judicial system making it more liberal and progressive. The reform separated the courts from the administration, introduced trial by jury, permanent tenure for judges, and made all the judicial procedures public and oral (Baberowski 2006, 344-348). In 1874 the last major reform modified the system of military conscription, which

substituted the system of forced conscription of indefinite duration, with universal compulsory military service of short-duration (Lincoln 1990, 156-157; Raeff 1984, 178-179).

First and foremost, introduced as a reaction to the changing political climate in the international and domestic arena, the Great Reforms extensively transformed Russia's social and institutional arrangements and laid the basis for an increasingly modern, industrial Russia. The defeat in the Crimean War raised the question of the direction of Russia's further development. The model of the western European nation-state had demonstrated itself to be a compelling avenue along which to organize and mobilize society (Hosking 2001, 288; Werth 2007, 176). As such, following in the footsteps of other European nations, the Russian government began to aspire to the creation of an increasingly centralized and efficient polity which would identify more closely with the Russian nation (Maiorova 2010, 16-17; Pearson 1989, 91; Werth 2007, 170).

The January Uprising in Poland (1863-1864) further fueled nationalist feeling and raised the question of loyalty of other non-Russian peoples to the empire. On the Asiatic side of the empire, Islam was increasingly regarded as innately hostile to Russian culture. The contest between Orthodoxy and Islam over the Tatars in the Volga region and the Kazakhs in the steppe came to be viewed increasingly in national terms, as Islam was deemed to represent Tatar nationalist claims. These concerns were compounded by a mass apostasy in the Volga region (mid-1860s), in which thousands of baptized Tatars, discarded Orthodoxy and pursued a return to Islam. Finally, the subjugation of the Caucasus (1864) and the conquest of much of Central Asia (1840s-1880s) forged a more articulated ideology of imperialism, especially with regard to eastern territories (Werth 2007, 175-177). These events also opened up a new "separatist" dimension to the imperial officials' assessment of "foreign confessions". Although, as argued by Werth (2014, 149-150), most of the non-Russian communities (with the possible exception of the Poles) had limited demands for greater autonomy, the government, nevertheless, engaged in a pursuit of greater administrative and cultural unity, which consequently impinged on active local, regional and confessional autonomies.

Russia's aspirations about nation-building were expressed in social-engineering strategies that aimed at uniting the empire's diverse populations into a single community of citizens through imposing common duties, responsibilities and obligations (Hirsch 2005, 91; Yaroshevski 1998, 61-75). Better known as the policies of citizenship (Russian: *grazhdanstvennost'*), these strategies included several key components: the revocation of privileges from the kinship-based aristocracy, the promotion of local self-government, and the reform of native courts. Additionally, joint governmental and missionary efforts sought to spread literary and public education. The combination of these measures would result in the incorporation of the Empire's "non-Russians" or "*inorodtsy*" in the public sphere (Yaroshevski 1998, 61-75). This drive for greater uniformity and centralization signaled a new phase in the empire's quest for legibility, with a focus on "civilizing" its so-called "eastern" or "oriental" peoples. In doing so, Russia's efforts began to increasingly resemble other European projects of modern colonialism (Campbell 2015, 33, 217; Werth 2007, 178, 2014, 142-3).

The "civilizing" mission implied a higher degree of assimilation of the minorities with the dominant population. However, these nationalist sentiments and civilizing projects were complicated by the absence of a clear definition of the "Russian nation" or of "non-Russians" at that time (Crews 2006, 294; Maiorova 2010, 8; Weeks 2008, 8; Werth 2014, 150). As Geraci (2001, 343-344) observed, perspectives on what constituted "Russianness" diverged greatly, and combined such different elements as religion, language, administration, customs, political loyalty, race and history in multiple ways, with no consensus on how, when, or where these elements should be forced upon the non-Russian population of the empire.

Since the eighteenth century the imperial bureaucracy had relied on confessional and estate categories to classify, register and administer its diverse peoples. As such, certain confessions became ascribed to a certain nationality, that is Catholic – with "Polish", Lutheran – "German", and Muslim – with "Tatar", and, of course, Orthodox was associated with "Russian" (Dolbilov 2010, 17, 42). However, from the middle of the nineteenth century, the confessional characteristics increasingly gave way to "new taxonomies rooted in language

and ultimately in ethnic origins” (Werth 2007, 169). In his studies on Southern Bessarabia, Simon Schlegel (2019, 60-62) noted that while ethnic boundaries shifted from religious and estate markers to linguistic ones between the 1820s and 1890s, ethnicity remained a fluid concept even by 1892, varying among scholars, administrators, and the general population. Similarly, Slocum (1998, 181-182) highlighted how the term *inorodtsy* (literally “those of other origin”) expanded from referring mainly to nomadic and semi-nomadic Siberian peoples to include an increasing number of ethnic groups, whose social structures considerably differed from the Russian model. Despite the fact, that Orthodoxy continued to be the most important element defining Russian nationality until the end of the imperial period, religion was no longer a sufficient condition and Russian language grew increasingly relevant to “Russianness” (Crews 2006, 302; Geraci and Khodarkovsky 2001, 278-279; Weeks 2008, 8; Werth 2014, 151).

The increasing significance of language and other secular elements of culture such as sedentariness resulted in more frequent references to Russification (Russian: *obrusenie*), which implied a process of cultural assimilation more extensive and thorough than Christianization (Werth 2007, 169). In a similar vein, Edward Thaden (1981, 8-9) noted how from the middle of the nineteenth century, the passive version *obruset’* as “to become Russian” was substituted by the active verb *obrusit’* as “to make someone Russian”, showing a more active participation in the process by the subject. That being said, we must be extremely careful when discussing “Russification”. Historians agree that there was no one pronounced and unified policy of Russification in terms of a “master plan” to deal with its diverse population (Geraci 2001, 344-345; Thaden 1981, 459-460; Weeks 2008, 12-13;). Robert Geraci notes a wide range of attitudes and policies towards the Russification of non-Russian people that can be discerned in a variety of terms used during the imperial era: “Christianization”, “assimilation” (*assimiliatsia*), “rapprochement” (*sblizhenie*), “fusion” (*sliianie*), “civilization”²⁵⁶ (*civilizatsiia*), and “Russification” (*obrusenie*) (2001, 9). Furthermore, although it might seem intuitively true that the authorities had an interest in assimilating non-Russian peoples, some policies that come across *post factum* as being attempts at

²⁵⁶ Here and throughout the text by “civilization” one assumes the Russian way of life: Orthodoxy, sedentary lifestyle and Russian language.

Russification, were rational moves towards centralization and the removal of privileges that could also be found in other states at that time (Pearson 1989, 91). Indeed, Theodore Weeks (2008, 12-13) argues that policies of Russification were meant to spread the use of Russian and restrict the dominance of local non-Russian languages and cultures. And in the words of Vera Tolz (2011, 24) “cultural and administrative Russification of minorities in the late imperial period, should be understood as an attempt to strengthen the integrity of the empire with nation-building tools”. However, regardless of the motivation behind certain policies, these policies assaulted the languages, religious privileges and ways of life of imperial minorities in favor of Russian language, Orthodoxy and economic practices.

At this point we see, once again, and ever more clearly, how the imperial administration was by no means a monolithic actor, yet we see that different departments or ministries had different views and diverging goals. The Department of Foreign Confessions had been in charge of managing the empire’s religious diversity ever since its conception in 1832. Being part of the Ministry of Interior, the Department of Foreign Confessions had viewed its core objective to supervise and regulate foreign confessions in the empire (Campbell 2015, 55). The ideas of a greater cultural uniformity collided with the framework of religious toleration. A “fusion” of the many non-Russian peoples with the majority population could undermine the existing order managing the empire’s minorities, which was based on a multi-confessional establishment. Therefore, being responsible for managing Russia’s non-Orthodox confessions, the Department of Foreign Confessions was rather careful in embracing any policies that could disrupt the existing order.

The Ministry of Public Education - the second big player in dealing with “foreign confessions” – came into play in the second half of the nineteenth century and was less worried about maintaining the status quo. The Ministry of Education “became the principal government agency charged with articulating a proactive policy approach towards the empire’s non-Russian minorities” (Campbell 2015, 55). The Ministry of Public Education took a radically different approach and set itself different goals from those of the Department of Foreign Confessions. The objective was not mere management, but cultural transformation.

The Ministry of Public Education put schools in the “front line for tsarist acculturation policies” (Pearson 1989, 95). Developed by Nikolai Ilminskii (1822-1891) a new system of primary education became the key to disseminating Russian culture among the non-Russian peoples of the empire. Known as the Ilminsky system, the four-year public (*narodnaia*) school combined teaching in Russian and vernacular language, and employed natives as teaching staff (Geraci 2001, 116-121).

The growing importance of language and cultural characteristics in defining one’s “national” affinity made it possible to “contemplate Russification without Orthodoxy” (Werth 2007, 183). Although vernacular languages were increasingly used for teaching and Orthodox preaching, the Russian language became the main tool of Russification (Ibid.). Russian language was forced upon public institutions in Poland and the Baltic Governorates (Pearson 1989, 95). In the 1860s, the authorities attempted to introduce the use of Russian in some Catholic and Calvinist churches (Werth 2007, 182). In 1888 the government introduced universal Russian language requirements for Muslim clergymen (Tuna 2015, 91, 97). Around the same time, a universal Russian language requirement was imposed on the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*, too, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Following the 1863 Polish insurgence, the government began its assault on Catholic monasticism that was deemed a bastion for Polish nationalism. Not just stopping at executing those Catholic priests that were involved in the Insurrection, the state authorities shut down monasteries and dioceses, or transferred them to the Orthodox Church, impounded large amounts of ecclesiastical property, prohibited certain Catholic rituals, and forcefully converted thousands of Poles (Weeks 2011, 54-55; Kappeler [1992]2001, 254-256). When viewed in light of the Polish rebellion and imperial expansion in Central Asia, the perceived rising strength of Islam, too, appeared a potentially serious political problem. These apprehensions, voiced by some ecclesiastical figures and missionaries, led them to oppose formal recognition of apostates as Muslims, criticized the state’s toleration policy towards Islam, and called for restrictions on Muslim institutions (Campbell 2015, 52). Buriat Buddhism with its border with the Qing Empire was under a similar attack. Buriat Buddhism’s

connections with Tibet and Mongolia that were under Qing rule concerned the Russian authorities as politically dangerous and threatening national security. While, Orthodox missionaries pictured Buddhism as the main force hindering Buriat assimilation, and criticized the government for tolerating Buddhism in Siberia, Buddhist institutions were strengthened (Murray 2012, 186; 2016, 555-556; Vashkevich 1885, 81).

Being located further away from the frontier, Kalmyk Buddhism was not deemed as problematic as Islam, Catholicism, or even Buriat Buddhism which were all located in troubled border regions. However, changes in the imperial government's policies could be found in the case of Kalmyk Buddhism, too. Both the Great Reforms and the rise of certain nation-building and Russifying tendencies were clearly visible in the Kalmyk steppes.

These initial instances of Russian imperial meddling in the affairs of non-Orthodox peoples draw the main focus of this dissertation further into the story, namely: how the Russian Empire dealt with "foreign confessions" and their respective bodies of clergymen and what were the responses of these clergymen to the state's governing schemes. With the link between nation-state building, education and religion established, we move on to our particular case, that of the Kalmyk *sangha*.

5.2. Kalmyks and the "Not-So" Great Reforms: Juggling Caution and Confrontation

The rise of nation-building sentiments in the second half of the nineteenth century inspired some circles of the imperial elites to employ appropriate strategies. Furthermore, the January Uprising in Poland (1863-1864) and mass apostasy of Muslims in the Volga-Kama region made the government increasingly question the presence of a great number of peoples with their own religions, languages and cultures, living outside the sphere of Russian Orthodox influence. After all, as noted by Elena Campbell (2015, 33), in the new political atmosphere created by these events, "the cultural 'isolation' of the empire's borderland people seemed politically dangerous".

In this atmosphere, Buddhism, too, came to be viewed as a potential threat to Russian nation-building which could challenge the reformist premises of the government plan for modernization within the empire. Government officials as well as Orthodox missionaries increasingly accentuated the “ignorance” and “segregated” character of the Buddhist clergy, their antagonism to Orthodoxy, Russian civilization, and the state’s interests, and the large numbers of monks and monasteries that allegedly far exceeded Buddhists’ actual needs (Kostenkov 1892, 392-395; Smirnov [1879]1999, 24; Ukhtomskii 1891, 18-24). Summarized in the words of Colonel Kapiton Ivanovich Kostenkov, Chief Curator of the Kalmyk People, who in the 1860s was the most prominent figure behind a legislative production that aimed at reforming the Kalmyk administration: “the [Buddhist] clergy serves as an obstacle to the spread of literacy, sedentary life and civility in general, having moral influence over the people, [the clergy] assumes that with the development of civilization the blind trust of the Kalmyks in them will diminish, which does not greatly suit their [the clergy’s] interests [...]”.²⁵⁷ Thus, certain officials who dealt with the Kalmyks believed that the government’s new goal of a more unified and centralized polity required some degree of national cohesion, to which the *sangha* was an obstacle.

The mood for reform that engulfed the empire in the aftermath of the Crimean War thus also echoed in the empire’s approach towards the Kalmyks. After the 1861 decree that abolished serfdom²⁵⁸, at least nominally, the Russian government also began to consider how to emancipate Kalmyk commoners from their dependence on the nobility. However, after a lengthy discussion, it was decided that the Kalmyk emancipation reform was to be introduced simultaneously with an administrative reform (Matsakova and Komandzhaev 2009, 23-25). Combined together, the Kalmyk emancipation and administrative reforms were discussed in development meetings and in reviews by different committees and governing bodies for

²⁵⁷ NARK: I-7: 4: 103: 3a-3b: к распространению между калмыками грамотности, оседлости и вообще гражданственности много препятствует [буддийское] духовенство, которое имеет моральное влияние на народ, полагает что с развитием цивилизации уменьшится к ним слепое доверие калмыков, под что не попадают и существенные его интересы.

²⁵⁸ PSZ II, Vol.36 (1861), No 36650: 128a-134a.

thirty years. Finally, in 1892 the government introduced the law “On the Abolition of Mandatory Relations between Individual Estates of the Kalmyk People”.²⁵⁹

Table 1. Kalmyk population in 1862.²⁶⁰

Title	Male	Female
<i>Noyons</i>	18	23
<i>Zaisangs</i> and their families	1693	1420
Clergy	1452	0
Commoners	63 615	51 645
Total	124 472	

Willard Sunderland (2019, 454) noted that the 1892 reform was part of the Russian “mission to civilize” the Kalmyks, as the Kalmyk nomadic economy was regarded as both “unviable” and “undesirable”. The new law disrupted one of the last bastions of the Kalmyks’ traditional way of life: Kalmyk noblemen were deprived of the right to collect duties and taxes from the commoners. In return, for the loss of their subordinates, Kalmyk noblemen were entitled to receive monetary compensation. The 1892 law also modified administrative, judicial and taxation systems. It abolished what remained of the Kalmyk rights to self-administration: hereditary *noyons* and *zaisangs* were stripped of all governing and judicial functions, and their rights were transferred to imperial officials, namely to *ulus* curators and their assistants. The *aimags* were no longer to be governed by hereditary *zaisangs* but by *aimag* heads (*starshina*). The *aimag* heads were elected by the Kalmyks who resided in the

²⁵⁹ PSZ III, Vol. 12 (1892), No 8429. 173: Об отмене обязательных отношений между отдельными сословиями Калмыцкого народа.

²⁶⁰ Kostenkov, Kapiton. 1869a. Istoricheskie i Statisticheskie Svedeniia o Kalmykakh, 145.

aimag in question. However, their appointment needed the government's approval.²⁶¹ Furthermore, it is important to note, that although *noyons* and *zaisangs* were stripped of their hereditary rights to govern *uluses* and *aimags*, the 1892 law did not bar them from holding the post of *aimag* heads. In fact, among the one-hundred-forty *aimag* heads that were approved in their posts in 1892 there were thirty-eight *zaisangs* and two *noyons* (Matsakova and Komandzhaev 2009, 41). The 1892 law also levied a tax of six rubles per yurt or any dwelling, annually. However, the distribution of the tax burden was to be decided at *aimag* meetings.²⁶² Many members of the Kalmyk aristocracy and particularly the *sangha* refused to pay this tax, hence on May 5th, 1892 the Ministry of the State Properties was forced to clarify that the six-ruble tax was to be paid by all Kalmyks, including noblemen, their relatives, and the members of the Buddhist clergy.²⁶³

For the announcement of the 1892 law in Iki-Derbet *ulus*, *noyon* Gakhaev, chief *bagshi* Sandzhi Iavanov and five-hundred other Kalmyk representatives of different clans were gathered at Bashanta (today: Gorodovikovsk). One could argue that the government, possibly, attempted to imbue the reform with a sense of legitimacy by utilizing the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. Indeed, the official announcement of the 1892 law was preceded by a grand Buddhist prayer inside and a ceremony performed outside Bashanta *khurul* (L'vovskii 1894, 13). However, despite these steps, the Kalmyks reaction was anything but positive. They asked the Chief Curator to write a collective petition in order to cancel the reform (Dubrova 1898, 135). An Orthodox missionary, Jacob Dubrova, who was personally present during the announcement, argued that it was the Kalmyk *sangha* that incited the resistance to the 1892 reform. Dubrova (1898, 123-124) mentioned that the Buddhist monks were persuading the Kalmyk commoners that without preserving the traditional structure of the Kalmyk society with the *sangha*, *noyons* and *zaisangs* as leaders, the Kalmyk people and their religion would perish. That being said and despite this resistance, the 1892 reform remained in effect.

²⁶¹ PSZ III, Vol. 12 (1892), No 8429: 174-175.

²⁶² Ibid.: 174-175.

²⁶³ NARK: I-15: 4: 980: 46a-47a.

Table 2. the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and their cattle in 1862.²⁶⁴

<i>Ulus</i>	<i>bags</i> <i>hi</i>	<i>gelo</i> <i>ng</i>	<i>getsu</i> <i>l</i>	<i>mandzhi</i>	The number of the cattle owned				
					camels	horses	horned livestock	sheep	goats
Baga-Derbet	2 ²⁶⁵	132	90	104	700	2000	3220	40800	
Kharakhus- Erdneevskii	2	49	36	36	85	200	215	2000	
Khoshut	1	60	45	25	61	219	255	1750	
landyk	1	74	42	42	46	50	150	570	20
Iki-Tsokhur	1	62	51	43	34	221	292	5520	
Erketen	1	54	48	33	51	220	140	3500	110
Bagatsokhur- Muravievskii	1	73	49	44	33	440	123	800	
Total	9	504	361	327	1009	3350	4395	54940	130

While different committees were discussing the details of Kalmyk administrative and emancipation reforms, Chief Curator Kostenkov insisted on introducing some changes to Kalmyk Buddhist institutions. In 1862 the Ministry of State Properties followed Kostenkov's suggestion to introduce a minimum age requirement for commencing Buddhist monastic education.²⁶⁶ The 1862 reform became a point of contention between the Kalmyk *sangha*

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 145.

²⁶⁵ Includes the Lama of the Kalmyk People

²⁶⁶ RGIA: 821: 8: 1229: 1a-5b.

and the Russian authorities in the years to come. The monastic age requirement will be addressed in more detail in the next section. However, before moving on, I shall explore a number of other reforms regarding Kalmyk Buddhism that were proposed by Chief Curator Kostenkov.

Facing everyday challenges of governing the Kalmyks, Kostenkov aimed to modify the existing laws to eradicate their shortcomings and make the Kalmyks more legible at the local level. After conducting a thorough inspection of the Buddhist monasteries and the *sangha* Kostenkov discovered flagrant violations of the 1847 Provision. Indeed, according to Kostenkov he discovered illegal Buddhist monks, numerous *dayanchi*, immoral behavior, and what he considered economic exploitation of the laity.²⁶⁷ In a confidential letter sent to the Minister of State Properties in April 1863, Kostenkov wrote that after consulting with the Lama, he took measures to address the violations of the 1847 Provision. As such, Kostenkov corrected and updated the monastic records by adding missing monks, the *sangha* was once again prohibited from moving between *khuruls* without a permit, and the *khuruls* were ordered to nomadize with their clans or near them. Kostenkov also prohibited them from accepting new *dayanchi* without a detailed explanation and valid reason, and without permission from the Astrakhan Chamber of the Ministry of State Properties. The Lama was reminded to follow the rules introduced by the 1847 Provision when accepting someone to enter the monastic ranks. Indeed, the Lama was to test if a candidate-monk possessed the required knowledge, while the *ulus* curators were to check whether a candidate-monk's leaving home would not leave his family in an economically precarious situation.²⁶⁸

Kostenkov did not stop at reaffirming and enforcing the rules of the 1847 Provision, but advocated the introduction of further reforms to the existing regulations that managed Kalmyk Buddhism. Although most of his suggestions went largely unimplemented, they illustrate both the intentions of the imperial bureaucracy as well as the poly-centric nature of the imperial administration. Kostenkov's reform proposal contained four main points. Firstly,

²⁶⁷ NARK: 7: 4: 103: 4a-4b.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 4a-4b.

he proposed to conduct monastic appointments and promotions only in the presence of senior monks and *ulus* governors and *noyons* to ensure that all members of the *sangha* were literate in Kalmyk. Secondly, in order to distinguish between different levels of monastic ordinations, Kostenkov proposed to issue charters in different colors. Monks were to keep these charters upon their person at all times, and not hand them to their *bagshi* for safekeeping. Thirdly, Kostenkov proposed to introduce set prices for all Buddhist rituals.²⁶⁹ The fourth and final point was by far the most important: As he considered the Buddhist monks to be the main obstacle to the Russification of the Kalmyks, Kostenkov suggested further reducing the sanctioned quota of Buddhist monks and monasteries. Indeed, if the current number of allowed staff of Buddhist monks stood at 1656, Kostenkov suggested a reduction by about half, to 786 monks.²⁷⁰

Additionally, in 1864, in a separate proposal, Kostenkov also suggested modifying the Lama selection procedure. Kostenkov argued that the current way of selecting the Lamas that was determined by the 1847 Provision opened the system up for abuses. Kostenkov argued that since the Kalmyk *noyons* and *ulus* governors were the ones selecting the Lama, influential and wealthy *bagshis* would bribe the *noyons* and *ulus* governors in order to gain their support and win the post of the Lama.²⁷¹ Thus, in order to prevent such abuses, Kostenkov proposed to allow the *sangha* to elect the Lama. Specifically, those members of the *sangha* “who had the right to be elected to the post of the Lama”, which basically means *bagshis* of large *khuruls*, were to be allowed to participate in the election.²⁷² A quorum of two-thirds, which would have been fifteen of all *bagshis* of larger *khuruls* would be required for the Lama’s election to take place, and a simple majority would be required to get the post. The Lama’s election was to be conducted in Astrakhan under the immediate supervision of the Chief Curator. Prior to the election assembly, the Chief Curator was to announce if any of *bagshis* were disqualified from being elected and for which reasons, and if any of the *bagshi* was not

²⁶⁹ Ibid.: 5a-6b.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.: 4a-5a.

²⁷¹ GAAO: 1: 11: 518: 2a-2b.

²⁷² Ibid.: имеющих право на звание Ламы.

allowed to participate in the assembly. After the election the Chief Curator was to present the name of the elected Lama to the Governor for further approval.²⁷³

Kostenkov's reforms would involve even greater interference of local officials in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs, establish more centralized and unified procedures, and set requirements for monastic appointments. However, these reforms did not find support in St. Petersburg. Despite the rise of nationalist sentiment among imperial elites, the empire's institutional order was still constructed on the basis of religion, and not nationality, therefore the regime had to be very cautious when implementing any significant changes to the institutions of foreign confessions (Werth 2014, 152). Although the authorities realized that the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's influence over all aspects of Kalmyk life presented a potential challenge to the Empire's nation-building efforts, however, the religious reforms proposed by Kostenkov were too reckless, as they involved a significant modification of the existing governing structure of Kalmyk Buddhism.²⁷⁴ Although Kostenkov's religious reform did make sense from a governance perspective, and indeed, could have contributed to the legibility of Kalmyk Buddhism, it was not in the government's interest to disrupt the stability it had managed to establish.

Additionally, as he was more preoccupied with the day-to-day governance of Kalmyk Buddhism and the Kalmyks, Chief Curator Kostenkov did not necessarily take into account the broader objectives that were behind the governing rules imposed on Kalmyk Buddhism. The regional authorities sought to make the process of governance more legible by suggesting to reform what they viewed to be "shortcomings" in the administrative system, regardless of the consequences for the existing order. However, the central authorities perceived the same issues not as shortcomings, but as advantages, allowing them to exercise greater control over Kalmyk Buddhism. As such, in a letter to the Minister of State Properties, the Department of Foreign Confessions argued against Kostenkov's reforms of the Lama's selection procedure. The Department of Foreign Confessions emphasized that it was well-aware that "the Kalmyk

²⁷³ Ibid.: 3a-4b.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.: 8a-8b.

Clergy has an enormous and quite harmful influence on the welfare and intellectual development of the Kalmyks and that our Government, in all its endeavors regarding this subject, always aims to paralyze this influence; however, concentrating the selection procedure of the Lama in the hands of the clergy will add to their relevance [...].”²⁷⁵

The Department of Foreign Confessions strove to maintain existing procedures, and argued that allowing the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy to interfere in the Lama’s selection would “deprive the Government in appointing of such an influential figure among the people, of the opportunity of being guided by views and considerations unavailable to the clergy.”²⁷⁶ The Department of Foreign Confessions criticized Kostenkov’s proposal, as contradictory to the government’s wider objectives: to control and gradually undermine the influence of Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. Consequently, the central authorities’ rejection of Kostenkov’s religious reforms once again illustrated the diverging opinions and objectives of central and regional authorities. The initiatives of the regional authorities did not always correspond with the government’s wider objectives, and aimed to improve the day-to-day administrative practices and procedures. The central authorities, for their part, had to carefully balance their aspirations to create a more unified polity and the need to preserve and to uphold the multinational empire.

5.3. Re-Launching the Mission: Orthodox Missions among the Kalmyks

Refusing to disrupt the existing system of Kalmyk Buddhist administration, the central government encouraged different types of nation-building activities. Among other things, the government began to encourage Orthodox missions among the Kalmyks. This gave the

²⁷⁵ ГААО: 1: 11: 518: 8а-8б: Калмыцкое духовенство имеет огромное и притом весьма вредное влияние на благосостояние и умственное развитие Калмыков и что Правительство наше во всех своих мероприятиях по сему предмету постоянно стремится парализовать это влияние; сосредоточение же в руках духовенства избрания Ламы еще более увеличит значение духовенства [...].

²⁷⁶ Ibid.: 8а-9б: лишает Правительство при назначении столь влиятельного в народе лица, возможностью руководствоваться своими видами и соображениями, недоступными духовенству.

imperial and Orthodox clerical establishment space to launch initiatives they felt represented the right approach to the matter of religious diversity.

In 1865 Empress Maria Alexandrovna oversaw the establishment of a new Missionary Association under her personal curatorship. The Association – which was supervised by the Most Holy Synod – had as its main objective to support the church in the conversion of non-Orthodox imperial subjects. Thus, the mission became official state policy (Schorkowitz 2001b, 211). In 1866 Count Dmitrii A. Tolstoi, an extremely influential figure from 1865 to 1889, who initially led the Most Holy Synod and the Ministry of Education and later became Minister of Interior and member of the State Council, received personal approval of emperor Alexander II on his request to establish a “Planning Committee on the Spread of Christianity among the Lamaist Kalmyks”.²⁷⁷ The Planning Committee was founded in 1867, and included Archbishop Afanasii of Astrakhan and Enotaevsk, the Astrakhan Civilian Governor A.L. Degai, and Chief Curator of the Kalmyk People K.I. Kostenkov.²⁷⁸

The spread of Christianity among the Kalmyks was not at all a new idea. As mentioned in Chapter 2, already in the seventeenth century did some Kalmyks begin to convert to Orthodoxy. However, Orthodox missions had never been as forceful and brutal as they had been in Siberia (Schorkowitz 2001a, 196). Indeed, the political independence of the Kalmyks and their subsequent allocation to the Ministry of the State Properties as well as a degree of self-administration shielded them from aggressive proselytizing activities (Schorkowitz 2001b, 215-216). Some members of the Orthodox Church, for instance Gurii (1915, 410), even went as so far as to claim that in the eighteenth—beginning of the nineteenth centuries “the ideas of religious tolerance led to an utter indifferentism towards the spread and triumph of Orthodoxy among the mass of foreign tribes that are subordinated to Russia [...]”²⁷⁹.

²⁷⁷ RGIA: 821: 8: 1235: 1a-1b: Комитет о распространении Христианства между Калмыками-ламаитами.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.: 1a-4a.

²⁷⁹ идеи веротерпимости, сведшиеся на совершенный индифферентизм в отношении к распространению и торжеству православия среди массы подчиненных России инородческих племён [...].

In fact, until the second half of the nineteenth century, the government remained very cautious when permitting any type of Orthodox missionary activities among the Kalmyks. When in 1832 Tsar Nicholas I permitted Chief Procurator Stepan Dmitrievich Nechaev to launch a mission among the Kalmyks, the emperor warned that Orthodox missionaries should act cautiously (Gurii 1915, 417-419). When evaluating the history of Orthodox missions among the Kalmyks, Gurii (1915, 432-433) noted that between the 1830s and 1840s the mission encountered many obstacles related to secular authorities: both, Kalmyks holding official administrative posts as well as Astrakhan civil authorities were opposed or at least reluctant to allow missions among the Kalmyks. Furthermore, the Russian Orthodox Church also complained about the difficulties it faced in converting the Kalmyks in part due to their “fanatical belief” in Buddhism and “relationship with the *noyons*”.²⁸⁰

The challenges to Kalmyk conversions went beyond the mere strength and influence of Kalmyk Buddhism and the *sangha*. In the 1840s under the influence of the Most Holy Synod and the Astrakhan Diocese, the Ministry of State Properties charged Astrakhan Military Governor Temiriazhev with drafting a report on the conversion of the Kalmyks. In his report, Temiriazhev noted that there were no Kalmyk translations of Christian canonical works or prayer books, and that the Russian missionaries had no knowledge of the Kalmyk language or the Kalmyks’ world view. Temiriazhev also pointed out that only those Kalmyks “adopt the Christian faith, who are forced to do so due to their life circumstances”.²⁸¹ Temiriazhev’s report illustrated, to an extent, that the Most Holy Synod used the Kalmyks’ “fanatical beliefs” as a pretext for downplaying the Church’s incompetence.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the 1847 Provision on the Governance of the Kalmyk People included several clauses that aimed at encouraging conversions to Orthodoxy. They stipulated legal protection and generous material compensation for Kalmyk converts. In case of conversion, Kalmyk noblemen were entitled to retain their privileges to govern Kalmyk commoners, and were granted monetary compensations. The commoners were also

²⁸⁰ RGIA: 1589: 1: 1016: 2a-3a: фанатического верования; отношения их к владельцам.

²⁸¹ Ibid.: 2a-3a: принимают Христианскую веру только те, которые вынуждены к этому какими-либо обстоятельствами жизни.

promised monetary rewards when converting to Orthodox Christianity.²⁸² As mentioned earlier, while Orthodox Christianity was one of the most important characteristics of being “Russian”, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, Russian language and other attributes of culture took on increased relevance. As the government began to embrace nation-building ideas, it introduced new policies that were aimed at introducing Kalmyk converts to Russian culture and ultimately assimilate them.

On December 31st, 1851, the Ministry of State Properties issued a decree that offered Kalmyk converts who adopted agriculture within three years, a twenty-year exemption from all taxes and duties.²⁸³ Furthermore, the government also began to establish settlements that were populated by both baptized and non-baptized Kalmyks and Russians, such as Torgovaia and Zavetnaia (Gurii 1915, 446-452). Additionally, in 1851 the Orthodox Church dispatched a field church to the Kalmyk steppe. Although originally aiming to merely serve the religious needs of imperial officials that resided in the steppe and staffed only with one priest, the field church was supposed to allow Orthodox missions to reach out to Kalmyks living far away from Russian settlements.²⁸⁴ Despite all these measures, according to Keemia Orlova (2007, 239) there were no Kalmyk conversions in the 1850s.

With the rise of the empire’s nation-building strategies in the 1860s, Orthodox missions received a new boost. The new Planning Committee aimed to engage in more assertive missionary activities among the Kalmyks, however, progress was slow and difficult, in part due to logistical constraints (Schorkowitz 2001a, 197-198, 2001b, 217). According to the Committee’s plan, the missions were to be launched in the Mochagi – a region located along the Caspian shore populated by poorer Kalmyks – and would spread further from there. Due to the relative isolation of Mochagi Kalmyks from the Buddhist clergy, and the population’s regular contacts with Russians, Mochagi was deemed the best starting point for the mission. The plans of the Committee ran into financial and personnel problems. Firstly, the Committee decided to conduct proselytizing and religious services in the Kalmyk language,

²⁸² PSZ II, Vol. 22 (1847), No 21144: 351-353.

²⁸³ PSZ II, Vol. 26 (1851), No 25864: 209.

²⁸⁴ RGIA: 383: 8: 7179 (1): 121a-121b.

not taking into account that there were only three priests (Smirnov, Nikolaev and Zdravomyslov) qualified to do so. Secondly, dispatching priests required starting capital that the Committee lacked. At the same time, the Planning Committee viewed that Orthodox missionary activities and the reduction of the number and influence of Kalmyk Buddhist monks were two sides of the same coin, and requested a further reduction in the number of Buddhist monks.²⁸⁵ The Holy Synod and members of the Russian Orthodox Church remained certain that the Kalmyk clergy's enormous influence over the Kalmyks prevented the latter from embracing Orthodoxy.

As the second half of the nineteenth century progressed, Orthodox missionary activities continued. In 1877 the first missionary base was established in Ulan-Erge. By the 1880s three missionary bases (in Ulan-Erge, Noin-Shire (or Bisliurta) in Baga-Derbet *ulus*, and Chilgir in Iki-Tsokhur *ulus*, all equipped with schools for Kalmyk children from poor families were operating in the Kalmyk steppes. In 1898 these three schools together with the Astrakhan Kalmyk grammar school had one-hundred-and-four students: eighty-two boys and twenty-two girls (Malinovskii 1898, 249-264). However, despite their best efforts, the results were mixed. Thus, in 1891 the Astrakhan Diocesan Committee reported that despite some improvement, the actual numbers of Kalmyk conversions were still low (Malinovskii 1898, 218). The levels of devotion and commitment of new converts also remained questionable. In 1893 one of the curators of the Kalmyk People reported that the baptized Kalmyks of Noin-Shire (Bisliurta) who lived on the lowest levels of development, converted to Christianity because of material gains and had no idea what the Christian faith is actually about.²⁸⁶ A similar opinion was expressed in the reports of the Astrakhan Diocesan Committee: "baptized Kalmyks, who nomadize with their livestock in the steppe, and live far from missionary bases and churches [...] do not differ much from their fellow Lamaist tribesmen in their lifestyle, and do not know the Orthodox Christian faith well [...]. (Malinovskii 1898, 252-253).

²⁸⁵ RGIA: 821: 8: 1235: 4b-9a.

²⁸⁶ RGIA 1291: 85: 85: 5a-5b.

When assessing the missions' results among the Kalmyks, the Astrakhan Diocesan Committee listed a number of issues. Some of them corresponded with those faced by the mission in the 1830s and 1840s, namely: a shortage of Kalmyk speaking priests, a lack of resources and the overwhelming influence of the Buddhist clergy (Malinovskii 1898, 218, 252-253). Thus, we can conclude that the support of the government to the Orthodox missions among the Kalmyks had its limits. While granting permission to launch the mission, St. Petersburg had refused to alter the existing institutional and legal arrangements for Kalmyk Buddhism, despite requests from Chief Curator Kostenkov and the Planning Committee who both saw the reduction in number of Buddhist monks as a prerequisite for success of missionary activities.²⁸⁷ This opposition between local administrators – such as the Chief Curator – and central authorities – such as the Department of Foreign Confessions and the Ministry of State Properties – as well as religious institutions such as the Holy Synod, is a recurring theme, as these actors often held different views and had diverging interests. Indeed, whereas the Orthodox establishment was keen to proselytize among the Kalmyk population and for the central government peace and stability in the steppes was a matter of national interest; it would be the local officials who would end up being confronted with the possible effects of contentious and potentially provocative missionary activity (Schorkowitz 2001a, 199).

The contradictions between different local and central authorities with regard to govern the empire's foreign confessions were not unique to the case of Kalmyk Buddhism. As noted by Nikolay Tsyrempilov (2013, 161) in his study of the Buriat Buddhist clergy, the position of the local administration could be very different from the position of the Department of Foreign Confessions with regard to governing "*inovertsy*" (adherents of different faiths). Indeed, the Department had to deal with many different foreign confessions simultaneously. Often the Department of Foreign Confessions had to resolve conflicts between the representatives of non-Orthodox confessions and the local administration, because the local administrations were often overstepping their mark and pressuring the

²⁸⁷ RGIA: 821: 8: 1235: 8a-9a; 18a-18b.

followers of foreign confessions. Hence, at times, the Department had to take on the role of a protector of the foreign confessions in order to maintain stability and keep the peace in the “weakly controlled imperial periphery” (Tsyrempilov 2013, 161). In the same vein, Paul Werth (2014, 145) argues that the central authorities were often forced to counterbalance the regional authorities and their more confrontational way of dealing with foreign confessions. Upholding the existing religious order was the priority and any changes that could undermine it had to be carefully considered.

Although the perception about Buddhist monks as being “ignorant” and an “obstacle to civility” was shared by several powerful players – regional authorities, central authorities and the Orthodox church – one must not be deceived by the illusion of a unified front of imperial actors. The empire’s nation-building sentiments which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century did assume a greater fusion of minorities with the dominant population through their cultural transformation; yet there was neither a unified opinion nor a unified plan on how to achieve this objective. At the same time, although the regime desired greater uniformity of its subjects, it faced the challenge of maintaining the empire’s integrity, and had to transform these minorities without inciting rebellion. Thus, the government remained cautious in its support of missionary and public education initiatives.

While rejecting initiatives that might disrupt the established way of governing Kalmyk Buddhism, the regime nevertheless supported the imposition of new requirements for the Kalmyk *sangha* aimed at decreasing their influence and incorporating them further into the majority population.

5.4. The Minimum Age Requirement for Buddhist Monastic Education

The rise of nation-building sentiments in the second half of the nineteenth century envisaged a dissemination of the Russian way of life among the empire’s non-Russian populations. Being the most influential stratum in Kalmyk society, the *sangha* was deemed to be the main impediment to bringing Kalmyks closer to the dominant population of the empire. Therefore, it was instrumental to introduce the Russian way of life to the Kalmyk

Buddhist clergy. Lay Kalmyks, so the regime assumed, would follow. Russia's urge to modernize brought about new changes in Kalmyk Buddhism. As we already mentioned at the outset of this chapter, these changes introduced by the Russian government comprised three main measures that affected Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education. The first measure was both reactive and active. It was introduced in 1862 and concerned the introduction of a minimum age requirement for starting Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education. The second measure was the introduction of Russian language requirements for monastic students in 1881. The third measure introduced in 1890 concerned Russian language requirements for all Kalmyk *sangha*.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the regional authorities became particularly concerned with the question of a large number of *surgulin-kobun*²⁸⁸ or students that resided in the *khuruls*. Neither the 1834 nor the 1847 Provisions accounted for *surgulin-kobun*. It was not until the 1860s that the regional authorities took notice of large numbers of so-called students in official and informal records.²⁸⁹ According to Zhitetskii (1893, 50-51), *surgulin-kobun* were pre-novice level students, who entered the monastery to receive a religious education, but have not been ordained to the rank of *manzhi*. However, Aleksei Pozdneev argued that the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy used the officials' and missionaries' misunderstanding of the Buddhist ecclesiastical structure and divided the *manzhis* into two distinct groups: the actual *manzhi*, more advanced students, and *surgulin-kobun*, those who had only just started their education. Thus, taking advantage of the officials' failure to understand Kalmyk Buddhist hierarchy, the Kalmyk *sangha* presented *surgulin-kobun* as not yet ordained monks in order to maintain a higher number of Buddhist monks than was legally sanctioned by the government's quota.²⁹⁰ Additionally, as noted by Golstunskii, since monastery students wore robes similar to those of fully ordained monks, it was impossible to distinguish between the two.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ The literal translation of this term is studying boys or pupil-boys.

²⁸⁹ NARK: I-21: 1: 71: 6b: RGIA: 821: 8: 1229: 1a.

²⁹⁰ OR RNB: 590: 146: 13b-14a.

²⁹¹ AV IVR RAN: 60: 1: 5: 20b.

In order to deal with the rising number of *surgulin-kobun*, in 1862, following his inspection of the Kalmyk *uluses* a year earlier, Chief Curator Kostenkov urged the Ministry of State Properties and the Department of Foreign Confessions to introduce a minimum age requirement for beginning education in the Kalmyk Buddhist monastery.²⁹² Kostenkov emphasized that “it would be useful to reduce the number of Buddhist monks but until then we should prohibit parents from handing children to the monastery before they turn sixteen”.²⁹³ The Ministry of State Properties followed Kostenkov’s advice and implemented his proposal. In 1862 Decree no. 792 introduced a minimum age requirement that prohibited Kalmyks from sending their sons to monasteries for religious education and initiation to the path of monkhood before they turned sixteen, although the government regulation did not stipulate a precise punishment in case of noncompliance.²⁹⁴ In fact, our sources point out that the blame for violating the minimum age requirement was placed not on the parents, but on the abbots who accepted these boys into their monasteries. Indeed, the abbots were blamed despite the government’s official motivation for the minimum age requirement: making sure parents did not hand boys over to *khuruls* regardless of the boys’ wishes or religious calling – in other words, to protect the boys.²⁹⁵

It is important to note that the protection argument was used exclusively with regard to Buddhist monastic education. The Kalmyk Astrakhan grammar school – a Russian secular school founded in 1847 – had been accepting children from the age of twelve. There was no discussion about Kalmyk children’s possibly misguided “wishes” and “callings”. As always, the governmental position on the issue was situational and applied depending on their objectives. As Kostenkov’s letter indicates, the minimum age requirement was yet another way for the government to further impose restrictive measures on the *sangha* that in the future would lead to a decrease in the number of Buddhist monks. Furthermore, the growing number of

²⁹² NARK: I-7: 4: 103: 3b; RGIA: 821: 8: 1229: 1a-1b, 5a-5b.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*: 3b: полезно было бы, в видах уменьшения духовенства впредь до его преобразования, воспретить родителям отдавать своих детей в духовные моложе 16-ти лет.

²⁹⁴ RGIA: 821: 8: 1229: 5a-5b.

²⁹⁵ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 20a.

unauthorized *surgulin-kobun* required some action from the perspective of the imperial authorities.

Although most likely being a mere reaction towards the growing number of *surgulin-kobun* which were not authorized by the 1847 Provision, the government's decision to introduce a minimum age requirement was a sign of a higher level of government interference in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. If the 1834 and 1847 Provisions mostly dealt with issues regarding the administration, financing and designation of legal rights and place of Kalmyk Buddhism within the empire's administrative and legal systems, the introduction of the monastic age limit meant a direct involvement of the government in what were deemed Buddhist internal affairs. Indeed, educating a future generation of monks was a key issue for preserving and passing on religious traditions. However, a minimum age requirement put a limit on when one was allowed to begin one's monastic education. Furthermore, by introducing the minimum age requirement the Department of Foreign Confessions had a simpler and more obvious goal in mind: it hoped that the new rule would "in all likelihood lead to a decrease in Lamaist clergy".²⁹⁶

It will come as no surprise that despite the government's orders, the Kalmyk *sangha* did not always respect the minimum age requirement when admitting new students. Although official records from the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show that most of the *surgulin-kobun* were older than sixteen, ethnographic accounts and inspection reports show that there were many under-aged boys (Zhitetskii 1884, 50).²⁹⁷ The Kalmyk *sangha* overall, and the Lamas and *bagshis* who were directly in charge of overseeing the rest of the *sangha* and ensure the *sangha's* compliance with imperial laws in particular, took active part in maintaining the pre-1862 order. Similar to the situation with unsanctioned monks, the *bagshi* were concealing the real number of *surgulin-kobun*. In 1886 a renowned Mongolist Konstantin Fedorovich Golstunskii reported that during his visit to the Abganer *khurul*, though *gelong* Luzan had claimed that there were only thirty-six monks, it was obvious

²⁹⁶ RGIA: 821: 8: 1229: 5a-5b: по всей вероятности повлечет за собой уменьшение Ламайского духовенства.

²⁹⁷ NARK: I-9: 1: 58: 19b, 39a-40a.

that there were three to four times as many.²⁹⁸ In another instance, the chief *bagshi* of the Baga-Derbet *khurul* claimed that he was unable to present data on the total number of *surgulin-kobun*, because the parents of these boys bring them to *gelong*-relatives, and then after some time take them back home.²⁹⁹

Concealing facts and refusing to present real data on Buddhist monks and monasteries went hand in hand with actual sabotage of imperial officials. In 1862[3]³⁰⁰ the Assistant-Curator of landik *ulus*, Moisei Grigor'evich Novoletov, who had been dispatched to conduct an inspection of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and monasteries, sent a complaint to Chief Curator Kostenkov. Novoletov accused the Lama of the Kalmyk People at the time, Arsha Ongodzhaev, of attempting to sabotage Novoletov's mission to collect accurate data on the Buddhist monks and monasteries.³⁰¹ Novoletov presented an account of the difficulties he faced when attempting to complete his assignment. Novoletov wrote that after his arrival to Iki-Tsokhur *ulus* "it was clear from the Lama's attitude towards me that he knew the purpose of my visit –to inspect the clergy. Indeed, the Lama soon announced that he intended to lead an inspection tour of the *khuruls* himself the following day, and expressed his conviction that I was sent to accompany him."³⁰² Novoletov goes on to complain about the pace at which they moved between *khuruls* and *uluses*; and specifically claimed that the whole tour was orchestrated in such a way as to prevent him from carrying out his duties as he did not have time to properly inspect the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. During Novoletov's inspection of the Kharakhus-Erdniev and Iki-Tsokhur *uluses*, which he also visited together with the Lama, Novoletov claimed that although he did not see any under-aged boys in the *khuruls*, he was convinced that the boys had been sent away just in time for his inspection.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ AV IVR RAN: 60: 1: 5: 18b-19a.

²⁹⁹ NARK: I-7: 4: 121: 62a-62b.

³⁰⁰ The notation of the date, here, has been adjusted to reflect the fact that archival sources do not uniformly report any one year, some mention 1862, others mention 1863.

³⁰¹ NARK: I-7: 4: 103: 9a.

³⁰² *Ibid.*: 9a: как это видно из отношения его ко мне, но он объявил мне, что на другой день намерен отправиться для обозрения хурулов и при этом мне высказано убеждение, что я командирован для сопровождения его, Ламы.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*: 9a-9b.

Although the Russian government had continued to further the incorporation of the Kalmyk Buddhism into the empire's administrative and legal structures, this did not mean that the *sangha* obediently followed the orders originating from St. Petersburg or Astrakhan. Buddhist teaching had neither an age limit for novices nor quotas for monks, and the Kalmyk *sangha* was not about to change their centuries-old practices. Furthermore, another, quite rational reason, for the Kalmyk *sangha's* in compliance with the 1862 minimum age requirement could be understood as their own personal gains. As mentioned before, each *gelong* trained several students. These students in turn served him out of gratitude for his guidance. Additionally, the students' families would also present the *gelong* with gifts. Thus, refusing to accept Kalmyk children into *khuruls* would decrease the revenues earned by the monasteries.

The introduction of a minimum age requirement could be viewed in both reactive and active terms. On the one hand, this measure was aimed at resolving the *surgulin-kobun* question. On the other hand, the minimum age requirement was aimed at decreasing the influence of the Kalmyk Buddhist monks and decreasing their future numbers. For the Kalmyks, the age limit meant a deeper penetration into Kalmyk Buddhist internal affairs. The government had begun to involve itself in the upbringing of future monks and young Kalmyks. The Kalmyk *sangha* was not ready to surrender on this issue. Thus, a storm of complaints followed the implementation of the 1862 monastic age limit, spawning further disagreements between the authorities and the *sangha*.

5.5. Enforcing Civilization: Russian Language for Buddhist Novices

The introduction of the minimum age requirement in 1862 did not go smoothly. As was the case with previous regulations and laws, the Kalmyk *sangha* had the space and ability to argue against the regulations and frequently ignored and evaded them. Though largely ignoring it, the Kalmyk *sangha* nevertheless saw the 1862 regulation as an infringement upon their religious freedom to practice Buddhism. A flurry of complaints reached St. Petersburg demanding the revocation of the 1862 minimum age requirement.

The Lama of the Kalmyk People Zombo-Arakba Samtanov in his memorandum to the Minister of State Properties from January 21st, 1880 argued that the spirit of the minimum age requirement violates the freedom of conscience granted by the 1847 Provision. The Lama warned the Minister that the authorities' policy of limiting the number of Buddhist monks "could lead to violations of rules of religion that would cause dissatisfaction of the religious Kalmyk people."³⁰⁴ Furthermore, the Lama stressed that sixteen years of age was too late to begin Buddhist monastic education. In order to avoid negative sentiments among the Kalmyks, Lama Samtanov petitioned the Minister of State Properties to leave the monks' staff quotas as they were. Furthermore, Lama Samtanov also asked to remove the 1862 minimum age requirement and allow the Kalmyk boys to start studying Buddhist teaching at the same age as they are allowed to enter the Astrakhan Kalmyk grammar school which was between the ages of eight and twelve.³⁰⁵

Facing such fierce opposition from the Lama, Minister Mikhail Nikolaevich Ostrovskii admitted that an absolute prohibition for the Kalmyks to give their children under sixteen years old to the *khurul* "deprives the chance of them [the children][...] of a timely start of detailed study of the basics of their faiths and in general this measure seems to contradict the principle of religious tolerance that was adopted towards other allogenic tribes of Russia [...]"³⁰⁶ However, the Ministry of State Properties did not rescind its earlier decision. On the contrary, in 1881 a new ministerial Regulation No. 360³⁰⁷ introduced with a promise to modify the minimum age requirement, in practice imposed further restrictions. This regulation emerged around the time of Alexander II's assassination in 1881, marking a shift toward more conservative autocratic policies. The new emperor, Alexander III, was more receptive to Slavophile notions on the national character of autocracy. While not directly initiated by him,

³⁰⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 16a-16b: повлечь за собой нарушение правил веры и вместе с тем недовольство религиозного калмыцкого народа.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.: 16-17; PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21155: 372.

³⁰⁶ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 20b-21a: лишает возможности тех из них [детей] [...] своевременно заняться более подробным изучением оснований своей веры и вообще такая мера оказывается несогласною с принципом веротерпимости принятым в отношении других инородческих племен России [...].

³⁰⁷ I refer to it as the 1881 regulation, as I believe using a specific year makes it easier for a reader to place the events in the historical continuum.

his ascension may have spurred reforms like Regulation No. 360, aimed at promoting the Russian language.

Regulation No. 360 was adopted on August 29th, 1881 and officially allowed Kalmyk boys to enter *khuruls* before they had turned sixteen, however, it set two major conditions. Firstly, prior to starting Buddhist monastic education, these Kalmyk boys had to complete their secular education in the *ulus* school (secular schools for Kalmyks) or any other school. And, secondly, they had to pass a Russian language exam. Additionally, the 1881 regulation stipulated that the number of boys in one *khurul* should not exceed the number of *gelongs* in that same *khurul*.³⁰⁸ Following the regulation from 1862 that installed a monastic age limit, the 1881 regulation was the second government measure that interfered in Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education. In its aspiration to build a more culturally and administratively unified polity the government further infringed on the existing freedoms and autonomy of its “foreign confessions”. Thus, the 1881 regulation evidently put further forward Russia’s “civilizing mission”. Indeed, requiring Russian secular education from Kalmyk boys who desired to pursue a Buddhist monastic career was, undoubtedly, an example of a policy of cultural Russification, not unlike similar policies that were also being launched in other parts of the Empire.

Many accounts left by Russian officials, missionaries and travellers argue that the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy showed a fervent opposition to the spread of “civilization” among the Kalmyks (Kostenkov 1892, 392-395; Pozdneev 1889, 72; Spasskii 1894, 22)³⁰⁹. However, I would argue that the monastics’ responses to the new government measures were mixed. A small minority of monks, at least on the surface, embraced the new regulation. Among this small minority of monks was a *bagshi* of Baga *khurul* of Baga-Derbet *ulus* who in 1897 asked the Kalmyk Administration to supply him with Russian grammar books for teaching the *surgulin-kobun*.³¹⁰ Even Lama Samtanov, at some point, proposed to introduce Russian language classes in the Kalmyk *khuruls*. In fact, in 1883, as a solution to the problems posed

³⁰⁸ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 20b-21a; NARK: I-9: 5: 383: 404a-404b.

³⁰⁹ RGIA: 733: 42: 101: 21b-22b.

³¹⁰ NARK: I-15: 4: 980: 9a.

by the 1881 regulation, Lama Samtanov wrote to the Minister of State Properties that “if it deemed necessary to teach the persons that are to preparing to become [Buddhist] clergymen reading and writing in Russian, then assign this [task] to the *khuruls*, where there are *gelongs* who know the Russian language and writing, and therefore are able to teach it the *khurul*-students”.³¹¹ Lama Samtanov claimed that there were some monks that spoke and wrote Russian well enough to teach the boys Russian at the same time as they studied the Buddhist canons and prepared to become fully-fledged monks.³¹²

Sensing the new drive towards Russification in imperial governing circles, Lama Samtanov seems to choose to accept the 1881 regulation, however, he also may have wanted to ensure that the government’s interference in the internal functioning of Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries would remain at a minimum. That is, possibly, why he proposed that the Kalmyk *sangha* could teach Russian themselves, even though, contrary to the Lama’s statement about the ability of Buddhist monks to teach Russian, in reality very few Kalmyks were able to speak or write Russian. Nevertheless, contrary to what unfolded in the 1860s in Burma, where colonial British authorities used Buddhist monastery schools to build a near-universal system of primary education (Turner 2011, 232-236), the Russian government did not even allow monks to organize Russian classes in Kalmyk *khuruls*. The mission to civilize should and would stay within the government’s approved channels and the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy was not considered an appropriate or qualified conduit or partner, hence the government ignored the Lama’s suggestion.

As I mentioned earlier only a small minority expressed support for the 1881 Russian language requirement, but the majority of the Kalmyk *sangha* resisted. Monastic resistance generally fell into two categories: those who resisted silently through incomppliance with the government’s regulations, and those who overtly opposed the measure and denounced it publicly as being harmful to Buddhism. Indeed, the 1881 regulation spiked a wave of protest

³¹¹ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 19a: если признается необходимым, лиц подготовляющихся в духовенство обучать русскому чтению и письму, то возложить это на обязанность хурулов, в которых имеются гелюнди знающие русский язык и письмо, следовательно могущие обучать этому хурульных учеников.

³¹² Ibid.

in the form of numerous petitions. Similar to the Muslim population, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity alike were also skeptical – to say the least – of the Russian language requirements and concerned about what this might mean for their religion and its place in the empire. In 1883 Lama Samtanov argued that in practice the 1881 language regulation was not going to modify the 1862 regulation on the monastic age limit. Indeed, Kalmyk students usually reached the age of sixteen by the time they graduated from *ulus* schools, which means that there was nobody starting monastic education earlier than that age. Being realistic about the goals of the Russian government with regard to the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy, Lama Samtanov went further and argued that prohibiting *khuruls* from accepting Kalmyk children before they turn sixteen, is “equal to depriving us of the possibility of preparing clergy.”³¹³

The sources also indicate that the Kalmyk *sangha* did not comply with the 1881 regulation. An 1888 report of the Kalmyk Administration showed that almost none of the 982 Buddhist monks and the 1106 *surgulin-kobun* could write or speak Russian. Furthermore, although the official requirement prohibited having more *surgulin-kobun* than *gelongs*, in reality, there were about two and a half times as many *surgulin-kobun* as there were *gelongs*.³¹⁴ Numerous unsanctioned monks and small children in monastic robes were being regularly found during the inspections of the monasteries. Usually, the Kalmyk *sangha's* excuse was that grown men came to the monastery to pray and the young boys were newly arrived *surgulin-kobun*.³¹⁵

The Lama, who in the beginning expressed his willingness to support the 1881 regulation under certain conditions, undermined the government's regulation by continuing to present individuals for monastic ordinations and promotions based on the lists compiled by *bagshis*, without considering the question of whether or not they spoke Russian.³¹⁶ Not receiving approval on his requests for monastic appointment, the Lama continued to present the same lists of candidates repeatedly. At the same time, the Lama usually complained that

³¹³ Ibid.: 19a: равносильно лишению возможности готовить духовных лиц.

³¹⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 36a-36b, 106a-108a, 110b.

³¹⁵ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 2b; 18b-19a.

³¹⁶ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 11b-13a; 36a-36b; 106a-108a.

in some *khuruls* there is “such a significant shortage of clergy that it is impossible to perform rituals”.³¹⁷ The Kalmyk Buddhist clergy frequently succeeded in their resistance efforts. For instance, in 1888, in order “to prevent the Lamaist clergy from creating a hostile attitude among the Kalmyk people towards the administration,”³¹⁸ the Chief Curator had no choice but to advise the Ministry of State Properties to partially approve the Lama’s list. However, while making some concessions, the administration’s stance remained firm on others: the Chief Curator still denied the approval of 155 *surgulin-kobun*, stating that the Lama could put them forward for ordination after they had learned Russian.

The Lama’s position as officially recognized head of Kalmyk Buddhist affairs provided him with exceptional power and authority. When displeased with the regulations or coming into conflict with the Kalmyk Administration regarding certain Buddhist issues, the Lama was able to use the complex system of the imperial administration to his advantage. The Lama would establish direct contact with or use an excuse to personally travel to St. Petersburg to request an audience with the Minister of State Properties, the Minister of Interior or the emperor himself to present his case. Reminding the authorities in St. Petersburg that the 1847 Provision granted the Kalmyks the right to follow Buddhism, the Lama’s objective was to win the support from the authorities in St. Petersburg, who would then order the Kalmyk Administration to make concessions to the Lama’s demands. In fact, when the Chief Curator denied the approval or promotion of new monks after the introduction of the 1862 and 1881 regulations, the Lama bypassed him and addressed the Minister of State Properties directly, obtaining approval for the proposed promotions and ordinations.³¹⁹ It is also important to note that, in his discussions and interactions with the imperial government and administration, the Lama referred to the clauses of the 1847 Provision, which had granted the Kalmyks freedom of conscience. Thus, the Lama’s ability to navigate the imperial administrative system not only underscores their exceptional political acumen but also

³¹⁷ Ibid.: 111b: такой недостаток в духовенстве, что не представляется возможности совершать богослужения.

³¹⁸ Ibid.: 111b-112a: в видах предупреждения возможности возбуждения ламаистским духовенством в среде калмыцкого народа враждебного отношения к администрации.

³¹⁹ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 16a-18b,28a-29a; NARK: I-9: 5: 1276: 125a.

highlights the enduring relevance of the 1847 Provision in safeguarding Kalmyk religious autonomy. By leveraging the very mechanisms of the state, the Lama ensured that Kalmyk Buddhism remained resilient in the face of shifting regulations and centralized control.

In addition to bypassing the ordinary chain of command, the Lama also frequently submitted inaccurate records. The Lama would, for example, omit a monk's passing from official reports submitted to the Kalmyk Administration. These omissions meant that the monk in question continued to be registered as alive and active, when, in reality, their official charters were passed on to the next monk who would then effectively, on paper at least, live under the name of the deceased monk.³²⁰ While one should take into account that the Lama, similar to the rest of the imperial administration, undoubtedly faced many challenges in administering records of the mostly nomadic Kalmyk population. Indeed, the Lama heavily relied on the assistance from *bagshis*, who supplied him with information about the state of the Kalmyk *sangha* in their respective monasteries and *uluses*. Therefore, it is also likely that inaccurate record-keeping started with the *bagshis*. These practices, such as inaccurate record-keeping, omitting information, or presenting false information could be viewed as examples of "hidden resistance" aimed at undermining the effects of the imperial legislation on the Kalmyk way of life.

When integrating Kalmyk Buddhism into the administrative and legal systems, the government sought to establish the Lama as the supreme authority within a centralized and hierarchical Kalmyk Buddhist "church." However, granting the Lama this highest religious authority also created opportunities for misuse and misconduct. As both, being the head of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and a state official overseeing religious matters, the Lama was positioned to resist reforms, particularly those concerning Buddhist education. Aleksei Pozdnev criticized the Lama for "deliberately excluding more capable or progressive clergy who might elevate the moral and intellectual standing of the clergy".³²¹ Pozdnev noted that the Lama, not fluent in Russian, consciously avoided appointing monks who were proficient

³²⁰ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 243a-243b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1708: 19a-19b.

³²¹ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 9a: сознательное не допускает в среду духовных лиц более развитых и способных поднять нравственные чувства в духовенстве.

in the language. Indeed, the archival sources show an example of how the Lama refused to promote Tsenden Sharapov, a respected *gelong* “supporting modern views”³²² and enjoying strong support from the Kalmyk *sangha* and curator of Manych ulus, to the position of a *bagshi* of the Manych ulus. Instead, the Lama appointed Khoichi Baburkiev, who lacked Russian language skills. Even threats from the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity to appeal to higher authorities failed to compel the Lama to reverse this controversial decision.

Where appointments at the lower level were concerned, those Kalmyks who received a Russian education and wanted to enter the monastery would wait for decades and often never received official monastic appointment despite fulfilling all the official requirements. The Lama turned these candidates down on the basis of an alleged lack of vacancies. It should be also noted that many Kalmyks who received Russian secular education became doctors, lawyers, teachers, thus forming an educated elite. And for those Kalmyks, who decided to pursue monastic careers, learning Russian and getting accustomed to Russian administrative norms, allowed them to better maneuver the web of Russian bureaucracy to achieve their own goals. The young men who received an education yet still aspired to become monks risked undermining the established hierarchy by writing directly to the Chief Curator or to other Russian officials asking them to bypass the Lama and appoint them as Buddhist monks. In 1899 a Kalmyk man from the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus*, named Ochir-Garia Lidzhinov-Dzhilziakov, forwarded a petition in Russian to the Chief Curator of the Kalmyk People. Lidzhinov-Dzhilziakov wrote that “from a young age, according to the Lamaist religion, I have thoroughly studied all the sciences and education required by the program for *gelongs* of the Buddhist faith, for which I have the proper certificate from Acting Chief *bagshi* of the Manych *khuruls*, Churum Dzhimba Ubushaev, which I hereby present to Your Excellency.”³²³ In addition to Buddhist education, Lidzhinov-Dzhilziakov received Russian education in the Remontnoe parish school, although he did not possess the official certificate of completion,

³²² Ibid.: 8b-9a; NARK: I-9: 5: 1276: 69a-69b; 131a-131b: придерживается современных взглядов.

³²³ NARK: I-9: 1152: 307a-307b: с малых лет по Ламайской религии я окончательно изучил все науки и образовании требуемые программой для гелюнгов буддической веры, в чем имею надлежащее свидетельство от И. Д. Бакши Маныческих хурулов Чюрюм Джимба Убушаева, которое при этом представляю Вашему Превосходительству.

as he missed the final examination due to health issues. Nevertheless, Lidzhinov-Dzhilziakov considered himself to be able to fulfill all the necessary requirements set for Kalmyks who wanted a monastic career, and requested to be allowed to do a Russian language exam, and to be appointed to the official staff quota upon passing the exam. At the very end of his letter Lidzhinov-Dzhilziakov even points out that his request is in accordance with the government's regulations, and that there are vacancies for clergymen at Sanbil Norvin Zapadnyi Malyi *khurul* in the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus*.³²⁴

The government presented the 1881 measure as a concession to the Kalmyk complaints regarding the 1862 minimum age requirement. However, the Kalmyk *sangha* viewed the 1881 requirement as further infringement upon their right to educate future generations of Buddhist monks. While a small number of Buddhist clergymen accepted the new requirement, covert and overt resistance were much more common. The Lama of the Kalmyk People became a key figure in the resistance to the 1881 requirement. His position as the official head of Kalmyk Buddhism as per the 1847 Provision granted him extraordinary authority. The Lama used this authority to reject Kalmyks who had received a Russian secular education from entering the monastic ranks, but was also able to bypass the 1881 requirement while maintaining a certain influx of new Buddhist monks to fill the declining ranks.

5.6. Russian Language for All Monks: Results and Further Prospects

Recognizing that the requirements established in 1862 and 1881 were not being fully implemented, Chief Curator I.S. Kartel introduced new measures aimed at “to gradually reduce the number of Lamaist clergy and especially to stop new admissions of students to the *khuruls* [...]”.³²⁵ His proposal included a regulation requiring all Buddhist monks to know Russian and mandating Russian language instruction in *khurul* schools. Kartel also suggested

³²⁴ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 8a-8b; NARK: I-9: 1152: 307a-307b.

³²⁵ Ibid.: 104b: постепенно сократили до возможной степени численность Ламайского духовенства, а в особенности прекратили бы дальнейшее поступление в хурулы учеников [...].

placing these schools under the control of *ulus* curators and limiting student enrollment to those from sixteen to twenty.³²⁶

It is important to clarify, that contrary to Chief Curator Kartel's assumption *khuruls* did not operate under a centralized or standardized educational system that could be linked to formal "schooling" as defined by the Ministry of Public Education (*Ministerstvo Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*) at the time. Moreover, Kartel offered no clear plan for implementing Russian language instruction in *khuruls*. Similar to earlier suggestions by Lama Samtanov to permit the Buddhist clergy to teach Russian, Kartel's recommendations were not acted upon by the Ministry of State Properties.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to correct the existing shortcomings in the regulations, in September 1890 Chief Curator Kartel and the Kalmyk Administration issued Regulation No. 3706. This new regulation represented the third imperial measure addressing the Kalmyk Buddhist education. It demanded Russian language proficiency from all members of the Kalmyk *sangha*.³²⁷ Moreover, Kalmyk boys without a basic secular education or a diploma from local *ulus* schools could neither join *khuruls* as *surgulin-kobun* nor advance to the ranks of *manzhi*, *getsul*, or *gelong* (Pozdneev, 1889, 72).

Although the 1890 Regulation did not establish Russian language instruction in *khuruls* or raise the minimum age for admission, it had a profound impact on the Kalmyk *sangha*. Compliance was nearly impossible due to the scarcity of schools offering Russian instruction. By 1894, only six *ulus* schools operated across the Kalmyk *uluses*, enrolling just 116 students, not all of whom were Kalmyks (Spasskii, 1894, 30-31). Thus, while the government demanded Russian language proficiency from the *sangha*, the limited availability of educational resources rendered this expectation unrealistic.

It will not come as a great surprise that the new regulations were followed by a fresh wave of resistance from the Kalmyks. New petitions continued to demand the abolishment

³²⁶ Ibid.: 105a-106b, 109a-112a.

³²⁷ NARK: I-9: 5: 383: 14a-14b.

of the Russian language requirements. For instance, the Kalmyks of the northern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus* argued that it was impossible to fulfill the government's requirements as there was an acute shortage of places in *ulus* schools. Indeed, as they pointed out, the only school in their *ulus* accepted a limited number of students, which meant that even if they wanted to, the majority of Kalmyk children could not get access to education. Furthermore, those few students who did receive the required level of education could not all be counted on to enter monastic life, some preferring to pursue a career in the administration. The local administration, in turn, considered the Kalmyk complaints unjustified. The curator of the northern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus* argued that Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries had a sizable income and jointly should be able to open and finance at least one school where students could learn Russian so as to be able to enter the monastic ranks.³²⁸ However, as already mentioned, when Lama Samtanov asked permission to open Russian language classes in *khuruls*, his suggestion was not approved.

Meanwhile, the Lama of the Kalmyk People was drawing the government's attention to the shortage of Kalmyk Buddhist monks, thus hoping to persuade the Ministries of State Properties and Interior to abolish the Russian language requirements or, at least, to approve new lists of *surgulin-kobun* and to promote the existing staff Buddhist monks up the monastic ranks. In 1891 Lama Boro-Shara Mandzhiev (Боро-Шара Манджиев (1887-97)) argued that the number of Buddhist monks was already so low that it presented constraints to the *sangha's* ability to serve the Kalmyks' religious needs. According to him "in some *khuruls* only a few persons remain, that is why rituals, especially on important [religious] holidays which require large ceremonies, are often not conducted at all."³²⁹ In his request for the Minister of State Properties to approve the list of monks proposed for promotions and ordinations, Lama Mandzhiev emphasized that withholding approval violated the 1847 Provision, which guaranteed the Kalmyks freedom of conscience.³³⁰

³²⁸ NARK: I-9: 5: 2667: 141a-146b.

³²⁹ NARK: I-9: 5: 383: 14a-15b: при некоторых хурулах осталось по несколько только лиц почему богослужения, в особенности в большие праздники, когда требуется большая церемониальность, совершенно не производится.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*: 14a-15b.

Although the Chief Curator and regional authorities were rather firm in their refusal to make any further concessions with regard to the Russian language question, the Ministry of State Properties decided to pacify the Kalmyks by making concessions to the *sangha's* demands. As stated in a letter from the Ministry of the State Properties to the Chief Curator at the time: "Wishing to prevent the latter [the Lama] from inciting a possible discontent among the Kalmyks against the administration, [...] I deem it possible to fulfil the Lama's petitions, warn him that in the future, appointments to all spiritual positions would depend on mandatory knowledge of the colloquial Russian language."³³¹

It is necessary to note that Lama Mandzhiev's persistent complaining about the shortage of Kalmyk Buddhist monks was not a new strategy. For decades different Lamas had been filing multiple complaints to the Ministries of Interior and State Properties, arguing that the Russian language requirement caused a shortage of Buddhist monks, hence preventing the Kalmyks from satisfying their religious needs. At the same time, the Lamas would continue to present list after list of students and monks who were not able to speak Russian for appointment and promotion. After a lengthy discussion with the Kalmyk Administration and the Chief Curators, that were usually adamantly against giving in to the Kalmyk complaints, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of State Properties would usually concede, at least partially, and agree to authorize monastic promotions and appointments. Although the Russian imperial authorities frequently issued warnings that one or another Lama must "strictly abide by the existing regulations", or even uttered threats of sanctions should a monk continue to disregard the regulations, the Lamas did not change their approach.³³² Furthermore, Lamas who held the post after the introduction of Regulation No. 360, Zodbo-Arakba Samtanov, Boro-Shara Mandzhiev, Dzhimbe-Baldan Delgerkiev, and Chimid Baldanov, all managed to induce the Russian government to officially ordain and

³³¹ Ibid.: 27b: желая устранить возможное со стороны последнего возбуждение в калмыках недовольства против администрации, [...] полагал возможным исполнить ходатайства Ламы, но вместе с тем предупредить его, что на будущее время утверждение во всех духовных должностях будет зависеть от неперемennого знания русской разговорной речи.

³³² NARK: I-9: 5: 1276: 158a: необходимо вменить в строгую обязанность.

promote Kalmyk Buddhist monks despite the fact that this violated the existing regulations on Buddhism.³³³

Based upon numerous examples cited above, it is safe to say that there was a degree of disagreement between the Lama of the Kalmyk People, on the one hand, and the Chief Curator on the other hand. The Chief Curator's administration issued rules and regulations and had to ensure that the Kalmyk Buddhist monks would follow these rules. However, the Lama frequently either ignored or petitioned against those same rules, and was addressing his complaints not merely to the Kalmyk Administration but to the Ministries of State Properties and Interior. Although largely sharing the Chief Curator's concerns and objectives, these Ministries seemed more concerned with avoiding conflicts, perhaps in part because they had the entire multi-confessional establishment to consider. Thus, the ministries were more inclined to make concessions.

Even among some Russian elites, the question of Russian language requirements for the Kalmyks was a hotly debated issue. Aleksei Pozdnev (1889, 72) argued that "since the Kalmyk clergy is the main brake in bringing Kalmyks closer to the Russian way of life [...] there is nothing more important than to introduce the Russian language and Russian literacy into the lives of *gelongs* themselves". Pozdnev argued that if the requirement of secular Russian education would shake the Kalmyk *sangha's* belief in "Buddhist teaching's 'truthfulness'", and since the Buddhist *sangha* held great authority in Kalmyk society, their exposure to the Russian language would set an example for the rest of the commoners, who would follow their example and discard their Buddhist beliefs (1889, 72). This way, he argued: "With time, it is possible that there will be no more substitutions for *gelongs*, and the Lamaist clergy will either disappear or will continue to exist only unofficially".³³⁴ Also advocating for introducing Russian language requirements to the Buddhist clergy, Spasskii (1894, 24) believed that this requirement would induce more Kalmyks to learn Russian. However, diplomat and orientalist

³³³ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 11a-13b; 36a-36b; 106a-108b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1276: 158a-160b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1788: 96a-100a.

³³⁴ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 25b: Со временем может быть то, что заместителей гелюнгов не окажется и ламайское духовенство или исчезнет, или будет существовать неофициально.

Esper Ukhtomskii, who was an advisor to Emperor Nicholas II expressed a different opinion. Ukhtomskii (1891, 22) argued that “the pagan priests that are not touched by the influences of Western civilization are much weaker and harmless in socio-political terms”. Ukhtomskii argued that those Kalmyks who were half-educated in the Western manner started to despise Russian culture rather quickly, and under no condition wanted to get any closer to the Russians. In the Kalmyk clergy’s ignorance, Ukhtomskii saw an opportunity for the Russian administration to russify the Kalmyk masses, since educated Kalmyk clergymen would actively resist Russification (Ukhtomsky 1891, 22-24). While they disagreed on the effect of Russian language requirements on the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy, both sides agreed that the Kalmyks needed to be civilized and thus Russified. The matter up for debate was one of means not objectives.

In 1902, the Kalmyk Administration evaluated the results and effects of the 1881 and 1890 regulations that imposed Russian language requirements on Kalmyk *sangha*. Overall, all *ulus* curators came to the unanimous agreement that the policies had failed. Indeed, in the two-decade period between 1881-1902 there were five recorded cases in which Kalmyk boys entered the monastic ranks after graduating from a Russian school – of those three graduated from the landk-Mochag *ulus* school – Sangadzhi Miichev and Garia Odgaev from Zamutov *khurul* of Iki-Tsokhur *ulus*, and Saram Sakhalov from Kharakhus *ulus*, the fourth case was a student with the surname Gariaev who studied in the landik-Mochag school but did not graduate, the fifth person was Chono Mandzhiev from Baga-Tsokhur *ulus*, who entered the *khurul* in 1895.³³⁵ All remaining members of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy who were appointed or promoted to monastic posts in this period did not satisfy the Russian language requirements.

While agreeing on the policies’ failure, the *ulus* curators had diverging views with regard to the reasons for this failure. The first view, shared by the *ulus* curators from Baga-Tsokhur, landik-Mochag *ulus* and Kalmyk Bazar, argued that the problem lay with the policy itself. All three *ulus* curators believed that “the requirements that were being demanded from

³³⁵ NARK: I-9: 5: 1276: 77a-77b.

Kalmyk boys to enter the rank of *khurul* students were unfulfillable in practice”.³³⁶ As such, the curator of Baga-Tsokhur *ulus* noted that those few Kalmyk boys who managed to graduate from *ulus* schools preferred to continue pursuing a further secular education in Russian schools, instead of entering monkhood. Hence, it was impossible to fill the vacancies of Buddhist clergy with the Kalmyks who graduated from *ulus* schools. The second view, presented by the curator of the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus*, perceived the problem to lie with the Buddhist clergy itself – the Kalmyks who would like to pursue a monastic career were able to fulfill the Russian language requirements, however, the high ranking Buddhist clergy, namely the Lama and the *bagshis*, were refusing to accept the Kalmyks who received Russian secular education in the *khuruls*.³³⁷ Comparing these two divergent opinions expressed by the local administrators with certain examples from the sources cited above, one arrives at the conclusion that there is merit to both opinions. Indeed, the sources cited above illustrated that the Kalmyk graduates preferred other career paths to the path of monkhood, and the Lamas and *bagshis* were not particularly keen on having Russian-educated Kalmyks join *khuruls*. Consequently, when assessing the results and effects of the government’s language policies, one could conclude that the reasons for the policies’ failure was not merely an outcome of uncoordinated administrative and governing practices and diverging opinions within the imperial apparatus, but also of the decisions and actions of the Kalmyk *sangha* and the Kalmyk students in question.

³³⁶ Ibid.: 77b: правила предъявляемые к калмыцким мальчикам на права поступления их в хурульные ученики не вполне применимы на практике.

³³⁷ Ibid.: 70b- 71a; 77a-77b.



Figure 4. Photograph of the Khoshut *khurul* in the Khoshut *ulus*. Courtesy of the National Museum of the Kalmyk Republic.

The failure of the 1881 and 1890 regulations brought the idea of establishing the option of Russian secular education inside the Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries to the fore once more. As such, the curator of the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus* suggested to open one Russian school in one *khurul* for each *ulus*. He argued it was the only way to have a positive influence over the Kalmyk *sangha* and increase their level of education and civilization. The curator expected that the *sangha*, in turn, would positively influence the Kalmyk commoners, thus attracting the latter to learn Russian as well.³³⁸

The Lama at the time, Lama Delgerkiev, had a peculiar approach to the idea of installing Russian education inside Buddhist monasteries, an approach that could best be characterized by duplexity. Similar to Lama Samtanov, who, two decades previously, had

³³⁸ NARK: I-9:5: 1276: 70b- 71a.

proposed to allow the Kalmyk *sangha* to teach Russian in *khuruls*, Lama Delgerkiev also personally addressed Minister of State Properties Aleksei Sergeevich Ermolov and pointed out the need for opening schools in *khuruls*. To the Minister, Lama Delgerkiev argued that the Kalmyk *sangha* should have the same schools as other peoples of foreign confessions. However, the Lama left out the fact that these schools of other “foreign confessions” were established by and were under the control of the Ministry of Education.³³⁹ To the Kalmyk Administration, on the other hand, Lama Delgerkiev expressed fierce opposition to opening Russo-Kalmyk schools for educating monastic students in *khuruls*. He emphasized three reasons for his opposition: firstly, a *surgulin-kobun* had no need for any Russian education; secondly, the boys who graduate from Russo-Kalmyk schools rarely became Buddhist monks; and lastly, *khuruls* do not have the means to establish and support these proposed Russo-Kalmyk schools.³⁴⁰

In the end, the discussion on Russian classes in *khuruls* never went beyond mere exchanges of opinions. At the same time, although the government considered their overall measures of spreading Russian knowledge among the Kalmyk *sangha* generally unsuccessful, the measures did have certain effects. Firstly, although many Buddhist monks remained unable to write Russian, more of them learnt to speak it, however poorly. And, secondly, the limited promotions and appointments of new Buddhist monks led to a drastic decline in the number of officially sanctioned Buddhist monks. In 1902 the number of official staff monks stood at 1096, 453 fewer than the legal quota allowed for.³⁴¹

5.7. Conclusion

In the second half of the nineteenth century Russian officials began to aspire of creating of a more unified and homogenized polity. This aspiration presumed a greater fusion of the empire’s minorities with the dominant population which, in turn, required further

³³⁹ *Ibid.*: 130b-131b.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 1276: 122a-122b.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*: I-9: 5: 1276: 124a.

manipulation of the legibility of the empire's diverse peoples. The government modified its strategies, and began increasingly to interfere in the minorities' daily lives. The Kalmyk aristocracy were further stripped of their hereditary privileges to govern, judge and collect taxes, the Kalmyk *sangha* was required to keep population records, and the Orthodox mission in the Kalmyk steppe received fresh encouragement and more resources.

The government's aspiration to achieve more homogeneity informed the administrative approach towards the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. Certain Orthodox missionaries and other representatives of the state began to increasingly demand reforms to the Lama's selection procedure, to the Kalmyk Buddhist administration, and demanded further reductions of the staff quota for Buddhist monks and monasteries. However, the government was rather cautious. While refusing to directly and abruptly change existing administrative and legal arrangements for the Kalmyk Buddhism's existence in the empire, the government, nevertheless, implemented several measures that were to have significant effects in the long run.

The increased interference in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs came in the shape of three measures that were introduced throughout the years 1862-1890. Starting out as a way to deal with the proliferation of the unsanctioned *surgulin-kobun*, the first measure, that is the introduction of a minimum age requirement to begin with Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education, nevertheless, aimed to have a long-lasting impact on the Kalmyk *sangha*: to reduce the number of Buddhist monks. The second and third measures fall more clearly into the category of russifying policies. The second required the completion of a Russian secular education and a certain level of Russian language knowledge from Kalmyk boys before entering the monastery in pursuit of a Buddhist monastic education. Finally, the third measure expanded the Russian language knowledge requirement to all members of the Kalmyk *sangha*. These two measures aimed at creating a barrier to boys wishing to enter monkhood, as the number of schools where Kalmyks could learn Russian was rather limited. It was, after all, rather difficult to fulfill the requirements. At the same time, the two measures reveal a clear intent of russifying the Kalmyk *sangha*.

As we have seen, over this period of time, the Lama of the Kalmyk People became a leading figure in the opposition to the government's russifying policies. Being the official head of Kalmyk Buddhism, the Lama possessed extraordinary power and authority, allowing him to use his position to oppose the new government's measures, both directly and indirectly.

Despite a drop in the number of official staff monks, overall, the measures described above had limited success. As they were pushed through in spite of opposition from the part of the Kalmyk clergymen and laity alike, the administration's demands went largely unmet. Official reports and ethnographic accounts confirm that until long after the last reform of 1890, under-aged boys continued to enjoy education at the *khuruls* and the level of Russian among Buddhist monks and students was far below what had been officially mandated. The reasons for the reforms' limited success are many, ranging from an ineffectual bureaucratic apparatus slowed down by more pressing concerns elsewhere in the empire, to the active and passive resistance on the part of the Kalmyk *sangha* to external demands for change. Aside from these there were obvious technological and geographical challenges faced by the local and imperial administrations when attempting to pursue reform and legibility of a nomadic population in a vast and distant land.

That being said, the central bureaucracy and the local administration did manage to achieve some of their objectives. Aside minimizing the number of Buddhist monks, the intermittent *khurul* inspections aimed at keeping track of the Buddhist clergy's numbers, demands for annual inventory reports, the frequent need for petitions and correspondence, and even age limits and language requirements – however ineffective – still signified a level of integration into the Russian multiconfessional establishment that surpassed what had been the case immediately following the 1847 Provision. As such, the governmental attempts at incorporation and, to some extent, Russification did have a lasting effect on the nature and functioning of Kalmyk Buddhist institutions. Indeed, the mere fact that the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity referred to agreements such as the 1847 Provision when engaging with the imperial administration, and very much like the Buriat Buddhists when referring to their rights assured

in the 1822 Statute, means that the frame of reference for what is considered legitimate had already successfully been expanded to include Russian standards and sensibilities.

Coming closer to the twentieth century, the empire faced a new socio-political crisis akin to the one that several decades earlier spurred the Great Reforms of Alexander II. Facing a new crisis, the regime was more receptive to popular demands, including those regarding reform of religious life.

Chapter 6. Reforms, Engagements and Services in the Age of Revolution

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the era of the Great Reforms favored the idea of nationality as a category distinct from religious affiliation. The increasing importance of language and secular categories of culture as markers of one's national belonging brought ideas of Russification to the fore. New government policies were thus aimed at bringing the Kalmyk *sangha* closer to the empire's dominant population by imposing demands of Russian language knowledge and restricting access to Buddhist education. These policies had limited effects, in part due to the Kalmyk *sangha's* opposition, in part due to the logistical constraints, and in part due to the government's commitment to maintain its religious order in the form of a multiconfessional establishment.

A new socio-political crisis at the start of the twentieth century induced the regime to consider political reforms. The increased demands for civil rights, including freedom of conscience, as well as the government's geopolitical interests in Asia paved the way for certain changes in the government's approach towards Kalmyk Buddhism. Furthermore, this change in both internal and external conditions opened new opportunities for the Kalmyk *sangha*.

This chapter explores four main themes relating to the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy that unfolded in the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of changes in internal and external conditions. Firstly, I explore the government's implementation of the 1905 law on the freedom of conscience³⁴² and the resulting process of discussion, negotiation and bargaining over the reform's influence on the Kalmyk Buddhism's system of government. Secondly, I examine the concrete effects the 1905 law had in the Kalmyk steppes. A third aspect concerns the attempts of reform-minded Buddhist clergymen and laity to reshape Buddhist monastic education. And lastly, I explore the Kalmyk *sangha's* role in the Empire's geopolitical endeavors.

³⁴² PSZ III, Vol. 25, (1905), No 26126: 258-262.

6.1. Russia's Socio-Political Crisis and "Foreign Confessions"

From the late eighteenth century, the government's approach to non-Orthodox religions was guided by a policy of religious tolerance. Religion played a key role in for the legibility of the empire's subjects, and different religious institutions were essential in extending imperial authority over Russia's diverse population. Nevertheless, as the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, three developments in the religious sphere challenged the status quo and forced the regime to further reconsider the sustainability of its multiconfessional order (Werth 2014, 179-180).

A first new development became manifested particularly in the empire's educated circles. By the end of the nineteenth century, the new notion of freedom of conscience emerged among the Russian intelligentsia (Michelson 2007, 3). While religious toleration had been treated as a "revocable privilege" bestowed by the state—granting religious communities the right to practice a particular faith under strict state supervision—freedom of conscience represented a profound challenge to the state's monopoly on religious identity (Michelson 2007, 345; Poole 2012, 613). However, the new concept of freedom of conscience, directly contradicted the empire's approach up to that point, which had been centered on the idea of granting communities the right to follow one particular religion as a state-conferred privilege, controlled and regulated for the purposes of stability and cohesion (Poole 2012, 633). This shift in thinking reflected broader European Enlightenment influences, which had long advocated for individual rights over collective or state-controlled religious identities (Pipes 2005, 62-65).

While the idea of freedom of conscience gained traction among the empire's educated elites, a second development in the religious sphere posed a significant challenge to its legal and administrative system. Indeed, the rise of "apostates" and "recalcitrants" undermined the legibility of the empire's diverse subjects as they did not conform to the state's predetermined categories. Large groups of apostates and their descendants—especially among the Volga Tatars, Uniates, and Baltic believers who had, at some point,

converted (forcibly or otherwise) to Orthodoxy—essentially existed in a legal grey zone. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Tatar apostates could not exercise their inheritance rights or officially marry (Kefeli 2014, 42-44; 143-146; Werth 2000, 502). At the same time, the apostates could not hold any official government position, as they refused to give an Orthodox Christian oath (Werth 2000, 502; 2014, 199-201). The Uniates secretly had their children baptized by Catholic priests and travelled to Austrian Galicia for their wedding rituals (Weeks 2001, 86-87). The “apostates” and “recalcitrant” also posed a challenge to the imperial officials’ ability to perform the military draft. As noted by Kefeli (2014, 43), since there were no records of the apostates in the metric books, they were frequently drafted based on their appearance and not their actual age. By the second half of the nineteenth century, as their ties to Orthodoxy weakened further, the “apostates” and “recalcitrant” increasingly demanded recognition of their status (Dowler 2001, 21; Kefeli 2014, 43; Weeks 2001, 86). Under mounting pressure, by the late nineteenth century, the administration made partial concessions, acknowledging some of the Tatars and Catholics in the Kingdom of Poland as belonging to the faiths they had declared in their petitions (Werth 2002, 244; 2014, 199-200). This struggle over religious identity and legal recognition exposed the tensions inherent in the empire’s efforts to impose a uniform religious and administrative order on its increasingly diverse population.

The third and final development that challenged the Russian empire’s religious order was posed by the clerics and adherents of various religions. Both clerics and adherents of different religions of the empire increasingly demonstrated tendencies towards religious innovation and “increasing engagement of the people in shaping religious life in Russia” (Werth 2014, 179). By the late nineteenth century, the Orthodox laity exhibited a growing engagement with spirituality and parish life, fueled by a desire for personal salvation and religious fulfillment. This led to the emergence of “new peasants,” who were more literate and spiritually active within the Orthodox Church (Chulos 2003, 54; Freeze 2004, 324). At the same time, Gregory Freeze (1983, 389–394) notes that some Orthodox clergymen embraced clerical “liberalism,” advocating for the democratization of church administration while emphasizing pastoral duties, such as education and charity. The Muslim reformers, the Jadids,

centered their efforts on Islamic religious education, also criticizing the moral corruption of some members of the *ulama* (Campbell 2015, 72-73; Khadid 1998, 89-93, 148). Among those known at the time as pagans, the Maris' "Kugu Sorta" sect embraced the idea of monotheism projecting it onto their foremost spiritual entity. The Mari reformers presented a set of ethical demands, embracing cleanliness, brotherly love, tolerance for other religions, hard work and temperance, and equal rights for women (Werth 2001, 152-154). A religious revitalization movement called Burkhanism emerged in the Altai region as response to external pressures, such as Russian colonization, missionary activities and social upheaval. Burkhanism rejected both traditional shamanism and Christianity, framing them as ineffective or corrupt, while promoting a revival of native Altaian life in resistance to Russian colonial domination. Central to this revitalization was the prophecy of Oirod khan, a messianic figure imagined as the liberator who would restore Altaian culture and sovereignty (Znamenski 1999, 228-232). Similar trends towards religious innovation and revitalization were present among Russia's Buddhists – specifically the Kalmyks – which will be examined more closely in this chapter. The common thread that runs throughout the myriads of diverse religious innovation movements is that they viewed themselves as fully aligned with Russia's political and social order, emphasizing loyalty to the monarchy, hard work, and sobriety to appeal to official sensibilities (Werth 2014, 182). These groups frequently used the state's own rhetoric of tolerance and religious liberty, thus raising important questions whether the government should accommodate their religious aspirations (Werth 2014, 182).

The new idea of "freedom of conscience," along with the growing challenges posed by apostates and recalcitrants, and the rise of religious innovation and revitalization among the empire's diverse communities, revealed the limitations of the imperial government's ability to maintain control and legibility. The state relied on rigid categories—Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim—to classify and govern its population, but these categories were increasingly undermined by the fluidity of religious identities on the ground. However, it would be the larger socio-political crisis of the early twentieth century, particularly the disastrous Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, that forced the government to address these issues more concretely. The political unrest, culminating in the 1905 "Bloody Sunday"

massacre, demonstrated the limits of autocratic control. In response to the increasing pressure, Emperor Nicholas II was compelled to make concessions, acknowledging the need to accommodate the growing demands of the empire's diverse and complex population.

On December 12, 1904, the edict "On Plans to Improve the State Order"³⁴³ mandated "the removal of any and all constraints on religious life not directly established by law" and called for a review of existing legislation concerning the empire's foreign confessions.³⁴⁴ This review was led by a special committee under the liberal chairman Count Sergei Witte, culminating in the well-known April 17th, 1905 Edict "On the Strengthening of the Principles of Religious Tolerance."³⁴⁵ The April 1905 Edict marked a significant shift in the government's approach to religious toleration, legalizing conversion from Orthodoxy to other Christian denominations and elevating the status of Old Believers and Orthodox sectarians to that of tolerated foreign confessions. It also ordered the reopening of temples, churches, and mosques that had been previously shut down, and introduced new rules for the construction of religious buildings, while permitting the use of vernacular languages in religious education. Additionally, the decree prohibited the use of derogatory terms like "idolaters" and "pagans" in official documents to describe the Buddhist population, and promised a review of the legal framework regulating the religious practices of Muslims and Buddhists.³⁴⁶ The language of the document reflected also a substantial shift in the government's stance toward minority religions, with the term "freedom of conscience" starting to overshadow "tolerance" as a foundational principle of civil liberties.

While the April 1905 Edict represented an effort to adapt to the changing socio-political environment and reconcile the government with marginalized religious groups, its impact was limited. Although it introduced elements of "freedom of conscience" by allowing Orthodox believers some choice in religious affiliation, it did not fully guarantee this right for

³⁴³ PSZ III, Vol. 24, (1904), No 25495: 1196: О Предначертаниях к Усовершенствованию Государственного Порядка.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.: 1197: к устранению в религиозном быте их всякого, прямо в законе не установленного стеснения.

³⁴⁵ PSZ III, Vol. 25, (1905), No 26126: 258-62: Об укреплении начал веротерпимости.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.: 258-62: идолопоклонниками и язычниками.

all subjects. Following the edict, many believers left Orthodoxy to return to their original faiths (Luk'ianov 2009, 319; Schorkowitz 2018, 297). However, from this leniency primarily benefited those who had converted to Orthodoxy but continued practicing their original religion unofficially (Weeks 2001, 88-89; Schorkowitz 2001b, 220). At the same time, non-Orthodox clergy began proselytizing to attract more people back to their faiths (Bendin 2010, 278). A special committee chaired by Count Aleksei Pavlovich Ignat'ev was later tasked with reviewing the legislation concerning Buddhism and Islam. Representatives from Buddhist and Muslim communities took advantage of this moment to voice their religious needs and submit formal proposals. Yet despite these steps, the reforms were neither far-reaching nor long-lasting, as illustrated by the case of Kalmyk Buddhism. Ultimately, the measures were insufficient to prevent further unrest, as socio-political tensions continued to escalate.

As popular unrest continued to spread across the country, Nicholas II was forced to further accommodate people's demands for political freedoms. On August 6th, 1905 a manifesto founded the new elected legislative body – the State Duma.³⁴⁷ The foundation of the State Duma was confirmed a few months later on October 17th, 1905 by a manifesto entitled “On Improving the State Order”. The new manifesto also granted Russian subjects civil rights, and the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association. The freedom of conscience was recognized as an individual right of every subject.³⁴⁸ However, the political spring did not last long, and already by early 1906 the emperor began to renege on some of the assurances made in the October Manifesto. In February 1906, Nicholas II elevated the State Council, an advisory body under the emperor, and granted it the legislative powers to counter the Duma. Legislative power was to be shared by the Duma, the State Council and the emperor (Dorskaia 2001, 75). The regime also withdrew its promise of “freedom of conscience” and reverted back to the principle of “religious toleration”. The new version of the so-called “Fundamental Laws” enacted on April 23^d, 1906 stipulated that “Russian subjects enjoy freedom of faith. The conditions for using this freedom are determined by

³⁴⁷ PSZ III, Vol. 25 (1905) No 26656: 637-638.

³⁴⁸ PSZ III, Vol. 25 (1905), No 26803: 754-755.

law”.³⁴⁹ Thus, the imperial government reserved the right to determine the limits of religious freedom.

The establishment of the State Duma meant that all legislative projects, including those concerning religious issues, were to be reviewed in this house. In 1907 the Duma members reviewed seven separate bills each dealing with different implications “freedom of conscience” might have on society and religion. Those seven bills were: conversion; the relation of the state to individual confessions; the guarantee of free conduct of religious services and the construction of temples; the legal status of religious communities; mixed marriages; the abolition of discriminatory measures based on religious affiliation; and a bill on Catholicism (Dorskaia 2001, 82-83; Werth 2014, 222). Although Stolypin’s government originally supported the religious reforms, fierce opposition from the Chief Procurator of the Most Holy Synod Petr P. Izvol’skii as well as other conservatives forced the government to change course and abandon the religious reforms. The Chief Procurator Izvol’skii saw the expansion of freedoms for non-Orthodox religions as a direct assault on the Orthodox Church’s privileges. He warned that the Orthodox Church would not recognize mixed marriages of Orthodox and non-Christians, even if the government passed the law. The Orthodox Church was also diametrically opposed to the extension of rights to proselytize to non-Orthodox clergy and proposed that local priests must be allowed to have a conversation with all potential apostates and demanded a sixty-day waiting period for those who wanted to abandon Orthodoxy. Furthermore, Chief Procurator Izvol’skii argued for criminal penalties to be handed down to those who leave the Orthodox Church (Waldron 1987, 127-138).

While the Most Holy Synod was protesting directly to the government, the conservative criticism and activism opposing liberalization of religious freedoms at times was also of a bottom-up nature, organized by a number of parishes where sermons were held and a petition circulated among churchgoers in 1909. The bishops of Volhynia and Podolia would later state that hundreds of thousands of signatures were collected (Werth 2014, 235).

³⁴⁹ PSZ III, Vol. 26 (1906), No 27805: 459: Российские подданные пользуются свободой веры. Условия пользования этою свободой определяются законом.

Submitting to conservative opposition, by 1909, Stolypin's government had gone from defending the Interior Ministry's original draft of the religious bills to declaring that the government must alter the bills in order to attempt "to reconcile the interests of the state and religious freedom with the interests of the Orthodox church" (Waldron 1987, 136). In the session of the Second Duma, prior to the discussion of the bills regarding religious reforms, Stolypin emphasized that this religious law will function in the "Russian state" which is ruled by the "Orthodox Emperor" (Dorskaia 2001,101-102). Thus, Stolypin confirmed that the government's position was to continue protecting the privileges of the Orthodox Church. Under such circumstances and under great pressure, the bill, which among other things dealt with heterodox proselytism, was never brought before the Duma. Of the remaining six bills none would end up enshrined in law. Two more were discussed in the Duma and four were never brought for consideration (Dorskaia 2001, 104-105; Waldron 1987, 137; Werth 2014, 238). As Werth (2014, 238) concluded in his account of the matter: "by December of 1912 virtually nothing remained of the legislative program on 'freedom of conscience'".

The early twentieth century was a turbulent time for the imperial government. Unrelenting socio-political unrest forced the emperor to make some concessions to popular demands. However, the government's commitment to liberalization of religious freedoms did not last long. The concessions promised in 1904 and 1905 were all temporary solutions aimed at pacifying the population, and as the 1905 revolution abated, the government changed its policy and withdrew its support for the reforms. Nevertheless, after all the promise of freedom of conscience aroused the interest and engagement among the representatives of foreign confessions. The Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and laity alike embraced the possibility of expansion of their religious freedoms.

6.2. Bargaining Over New Rules: Engagement and Negotiation

On February 5th, 1905, leading figures of the Kalmyk Buddhist community—*bagshi* of Iki-Derbet *ulus* Dordzhe Setenov, *zaisang* of Iki-Derbet Ovshe Norzunov, *noyon* of Baga-Derbet *ulus* David C. Tundutov, and *zaisang* of Baga-Derbet L. Arluev—submitted a petition

to Prime Minister Sergei Witte. This petition urged the government to grant Kalmyk Buddhists equal rights with the Orthodox population and to lift restrictions on Kalmyk Buddhism.³⁵⁰ The petition conveyed the community's profound gratitude, noting:

“The hearts of all Kalmyks, loyal subjects of the White Tsar, were filled with unspeakable joy and gratitude when they read his edict from December 12th, 1904. We, the undersigned, representatives of these people, upon accidentally arriving in St. Petersburg learned that the Committee of Ministers these days was reviewing measures and methods to execute the aforementioned Supreme Edict [...] allow themselves to point out the need to revise the legislation on the rights of Russia’s Kalmyk subjects, followers of Buddhism; and on the need, [...] to take appropriate administrative measures to eliminate restrictions and constraints in our religious life that are not directly prescribed by the law [...]”.³⁵¹

This petition was among the earliest to reach St. Petersburg following the December 1904 decree. As noted before, increased public involvement in shaping religious life was a broader trend in late 19th-century Russia, and this petition exemplified the enthusiasm sparked among the Kalmyk population by the prospect of expanded religious liberties for Buddhism. Both clergy and laypeople actively advocated for their rights through numerous petitions, expressing not only a desire for greater autonomy in religious practice but also an aspiration to actively participate in the creation of a new religious order that would grant more recognition for Buddhism and more rights for the Kalmyks – the followers of this religious tradition.

In May 1905, the government established a “special commission” to examine and reform the legislation concerning non-Orthodox religions. Although this commission did not

³⁵⁰ RGIA: 821: 10: 19: 2a-4b.

³⁵¹ RGIA: 821: 133: 414(1): 1a-2b: Сердца всех искони верноподанных Белого Царя калмыков преисполнились несказанной радостью и благодарностью, когда они прочитали его указ от 12 Декабря 1904 г. Мы, нижеподписавшиеся, представители этого народа, случайно приехавшие в С.-Петербург, узнали, что в настоящее время Комитет Министров занят рассмотрением мер и способов приведения в исполнения означенного Высочайшего Указа. [...] приемлем смелостью указать на необходимость подвергнуть пересмотру узаконения о правах рускоподанных калмыков буддийскаго вероисповедания и на необходимость [...] принять ныне же в административном порядке соответствующие меры к устранению в нашем религиозном быте прямо в законе неустановленных стеснений и ограничений.

convene until November 1905—following the October Manifesto, which had granted civil rights to all Russian subjects—it largely set aside these recent political reforms and focused instead on lifting longstanding restrictions on the religious practices of non-Orthodox communities (Luk'ianov 2009, 308). Chaired by Count Aleksei Ignat'ev, former governor-general of Kiev, the commission became, during its brief existence (until May 1906), a central forum for discussions aimed at overhauling the legal framework governing non-Orthodox religions in general, and Buddhism in particular.

Count Ignat'ev encouraged the Kalmyks to submit their requests and proposals directly to the special commission.³⁵² As already mentioned, a greater engagement of the population in forming religious life was a general trend about religious communities in the end of the nineteenth century's Russian empire. However, Ignat'ev's supportive stance may have been also influenced by a petition signed by a group of representatives from the Kalmyk laity from the Iki-Derbet *ulus* of the Stavropol governorate. In their petition, the Iki-Derbet Kalmyks raised concerns about the authority of the Lama to represent all Kalmyk interests in the review of Buddhist legislation. They argued that the imperial administration's interference in the selection of the Lama—appointing him without input from the Kalmyk people or Buddhist clergy—had compromised his legitimacy. This interference, they contended, not only undermined the Lama's authority to speak on behalf of the Kalmyk community but also cast doubt on his moral integrity and general knowledge of Buddhism.³⁵³ The Kalmyks of Iki-Derbet *ulus* were particularly distrustful of the Lama at the time – Dzhimbe Baldan Delgerkiev from Baga-Tsokhur *ulus*. According to the Iki-Derbet Kalmyks, Lama Delgerkiev “was especially rich and skillful at petitioning. [...] and was chosen by the Kalmyk Administration in this elderly age despite the desire of the majority of Kalmyk people [...]”.³⁵⁴ Consequently, the petition called for a more inclusive approach, urging that the review of the Buddhist legislation should incorporate a broader array of Kalmyk

³⁵² RGIA: 821: 10: 19: 13a.

³⁵³ RGIA: 821: 133: 414: 1a-2b.

³⁵⁴ RGIA: 821: 10: 19: 11b: отличается богатством и умением ходатайствовать [...] выбран он Управлением калмыцкого народа в таком преклонном возрасте, вопреки желанию большинства народа [...].

representatives, including both monks and laypeople.³⁵⁵ By advocating for a more open representation, the Iki-Derbet Kalmyks underscored their desire for a more authentic and representative voice in shaping the religious legislation affecting their community.

Concerns over abuses in the Lama's selection process, which had eroded the Kalmyks' trust in the post, were longstanding. As discussed in Chapter 3, these issues had been formally raised as early as 1864 when Chief Curator Kostenkov recommended reforms to address the corruption associated with the Lama's appointment. Kostenkov observed that Kalmyk *noyons* and *ulus* authorities played a significant role in selecting candidates for the Lama position, providing their recommendations to the Russian administration. This process, however, had been compromised by widespread bribery, as aspiring *bagshis* seeking the post routinely offered bribes to Kalmyk *noyons* and governors to secure their support. As a result, the Lama post often went not to the most spiritually qualified or respected candidate but to the wealthiest and most politically influential *bagshi*.³⁵⁶ For instance, there were persistent rumors that Lama Ongodzhaev from the Khoshut ulus secured his position by paying a substantial sum to *noyon* Tserendzhap Tumen, a highly influential figure among the other *noyons* and *ulus* authorities.³⁵⁷ The ramifications of this system extended beyond simple favoritism; it undermined the authority of the Lama among the Kalmyks and compromised his religious integrity.

Beyond issues surrounding the Lama's selection process, frustrations were growing within the Kalmyk *sangha* and among laypeople over the near-exclusive selection of Lamas from the Baga-Tsokhur *ulus*. This trend saw figures such as Boro-Shara Mandzhiev, Dzhimbe Baldan Delgerkiev, and Chimid Baldanov, all former *bagshis* from Baga-Tsokhur, assuming the position of Lama. This pattern could, in part, be attributed to a customary practice: following the passing of a Lama, a *bagshi* from the same *ulus* often temporarily performed the Lama's duties, a role that later evolved into a formal appointment. While this procedure offered a practical explanation, resentment among other Kalmyk groups was steadily increasing, as the

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 11a-12a.

³⁵⁶ GAAO: 1: 11: 518: 1b-2 a.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 2a; RGIA: 24: 37725: 1a-3b.

concentration of leadership within a single *ulus* left many feeling marginalized within their own religious hierarchy.

The questioning of the Lama's authority by a group of lay Kalmyks highlighted growing doubts about the effectiveness of the empire's system for managing Kalmyk Buddhism. While the 1847 Provision granted the Lama of the Kalmyk People supreme authority over Kalmyk Buddhist affairs, in practice, the Lama's influence was often limited beyond his own *ulus*. Aleksei Pozdnev observed that, outside of his home *ulus*, the Lama rarely interfered in the affairs of other Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries, focusing instead on his role as an intermediary with the Russian government.³⁵⁸ Further undermining the Lama's authority, the 1892 decree placed control over the Lama's selection in the hands of the Russian imperial administration—namely, the chief and *ulus* curators—without any input from the Kalmyk community.³⁵⁹ This measure created a deepening rift between the Lama and his would-be followers, as some Kalmyks seemingly came to see the Lama as a figure more beholden to Russian administrators than to the spiritual needs of his people. As a result, many Kalmyks bypassed the Lama altogether, submitting their petitions on religious matters directly to the Ministry of Interior, the Astrakhan Governor, or the Chief Curator. This rising distrust in the Lama's office not only indicated dissatisfaction with imperial oversight but also weakened the government's ability to maintain the legibility of Kalmyk Buddhism. This decrease of the Lama's authority and the growing decentralization of religious appeals highlighted the broader struggles faced by the imperial administration in preserving the existing system of religious governance over the Kalmyks.

Although the Ignat'ev commission received reform proposals concerning Kalmyk Buddhism from the Alexander, Kharakhus, Iki-Tsokhur, and the southern region of Baga-Derbet *ulus*, Ignat'ev directed the Lama to convene a meeting, instructing him to invite representatives from both the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and lay communities as he saw fit.³⁶⁰ Thus, though some members of the Kalmyk community had begun to challenge the authority

³⁵⁸ AV IVR RAN: 1: 126: 14b-15a.

³⁵⁹ RGIA: 821: 10: 19: 2b, 11b.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 13a-13b.

of the current Lama, this did not deter Russian authorities from continuing to rely on the Lama's oversight in managing Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. Excluding the Lama from these discussions would have directly contradicted Russia's established governance framework and further eroded his authority among the Kalmyks.

On September 1st, 1905, Lama Dzhimbe Baldan Delgerkiev organized a gathering of senior *bagshis* and representatives of the Kalmyk people at Baga-Tsokhur ulus. Yet, due to his illness, Lama Delgerkiev could not attend the meeting in person and was instead represented by Chief Bagshi Chimid Baldanov from the Alexander-Baga-Tsokhur ulus. After Delgerkiev's death, Baldanov would go on to succeed him as Lama of the Kalmyk People.³⁶¹ The meeting concluded with the creation of a reform proposal, which was promptly submitted to Ignat'ev. Additionally, the Kalmyk *sangha* and lay representatives once again requested direct participation in the sessions of the Ignat'ev commission. Their involvement would allow them to actively engage in discussions on reforms impacting their religious institutions rather than simply being informed of decisions. This initiative reflected the Kalmyks' growing resolve not only to influence reforms within their religious framework but also to assert a more active role in shaping their cultural and spiritual institutions.³⁶²

Although the petition from the Iki-Derbet *ulus* had argued that Lama Delgerkiev did not represent the needs of the whole Kalmyk population, most of the provisions of the Lama's reform proposal corresponded with the proposals that the Kalmyks from Kharakhus, Iki-Tsokhur, Alexander-Baga-Tsokhur *uluses* and the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus* submitted directly to the Ignat'ev commission. Both proposals demanded a certain degree of liberalization of the Buddhist administrative hierarchy, mostly by democratizing the election processes of the Lama and the chief *ulus bagshis*. Moreover, all proposals requested that the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity be granted the right to elect the Lama.³⁶³

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 24a.

³⁶² *Ibid.*: 26b.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*: 31a-31b.

Overall, the Lama's proposal included three lines of requests: changes to the institutional structure, removal of restrictions, and material demands. The first line of requests regarding the institutional structure appealed for greater autonomy and independence of Kalmyk Buddhism from the Russian administration and a certain degree of democratization in the selection of Buddhist hierarchs. The proposal suggested electing the Lama from a pool of *ulus bagshis* by the *bagshis* of all *khuruls* and lay representatives – one representative for every five-hundred *yurts*, without any involvement of the Russian administration. The Lama's proposal also requested the formalization of the post of chief *ulus bagshi* – as the highest religious figure in each *ulus*, a post which in practice had already existed for decades. In addition, they appealed for *bagshis* to be given the right to resolve marital disputes. The chief *ulus bagshi* was to be elected by the people and *sangha*, and approved by the Lama. Another suggestion included the establishment of a commission chaired by the Lama which would test and attest the *emchi*'s (monastic medics) knowledge of Tibetan medicine. Furthermore, the Kalmyks also requested to abandon the post of gelong-commissioner for oaths as it was distracting the gelong from his spiritual practice and being financially burdensome for the Kalmyks, who had to support him.³⁶⁴

The second line of requests advocated for the abolishment of numerous restrictions imposed on Kalmyk Buddhism by the imperial authorities. The Lama asked to call them “Buddhists” instead of “Lamaists”, as the latter was an inaccurate moniker. The proposal also suggested allowing the laity to reside in monasteries to receive Buddhist teachings as well as Mongolian and Tibetan language instruction, after which they might be appointed as monks. Similar to their co-religionists in Buriatia, the Kalmyks requested the relaxation of the censorship imposed on Buddhist literature, as well as the permission to print religious books.³⁶⁵ Among the most important issues was the request to remove the restrictions on new monastic appointments and to abolish the requirement of Russian language knowledge for Kalmyk Buddhist monks.³⁶⁶ The Baga-Derbet Kalmyks also asked to redistribute the

³⁶⁴ Ibid.: 25a-26b.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.: 3a, 24a-24b.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.: 821: 10: 19: 24a-36a.

number of Buddhist monasteries proportionally to the population of one *ulus*. This issue was extremely important for the Baga-Derbet *ulus*, as its population was larger than that of other *uluses*, but the allocated quotas for monks and *khuruls* was the same for all *uluses*. Consequently, the Baga-Derbets had fewer *khuruls* and clergymen proportionally to its population, a discrepancy they wanted to see addressed.³⁶⁷

The third line was more material in nature. An increase in the Lama's allowance was suggested as well as a complete exemption of the *sangha* from all duties and taxes. Additionally, the Lama's proposal included ideas to consider the Lama's and chief *ulus bagshi's* correspondence with the administration, as state expenses. This request would allow the Lama and chief *ulus bagshis* to save money on postal fees and at the same time it would further elevate their relevance in terms of the administration of the Kalmyks. Another issue raised by the proposal was to release the *gelong*-commissioners of oaths from their duties, or at least provide them with horses and carriages to be able to perform their duties, since they were travelling on official business. Furthermore, the proposal requested the right to tax-free imports of books and medicine from China and Tibet.³⁶⁸

Most of the reform proposals submitted by the Kalmyks shared similar requests, primarily aimed at securing greater religious autonomy and community involvement in spiritual governance. However, the Lama's proposal stood out for its depth and thoroughness, addressing both administrative reforms and specific changes to enhance the role of the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity within the Buddhist hierarchy. In the end, the Ignat'ev commission reviewed only the Lama's proposal during its sessions. As the recognized religious leader of Kalmyk Buddhism under imperial oversight, the Lama held a position that lent his voice a distinct authority. This status made him, in the eyes of the Russian political elite, the most reliable representative of the Kalmyk community. By prioritizing the Lama's proposal, the commission reinforced the existing structure of authority, favoring a top-down approach to reform rather than engaging more broadly with the community-driven proposals from the

³⁶⁷ Ibid.: 31a-32b.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.: 24a-32b.

sangha and laity. This decision underscored the state's interest in maintaining control over religious reforms while appearing to address the Kalmyk community's calls for change.

While most of the Kalmyks reform proposals included largely the same uses, the matter of the Lama's election procedure presented some issues. Several influential Kalmyks strongly disagreed with Lama Delgerkiev's proposal to reform the Lama's election procedure. On the one hand, *noyon* S.D. Tumen and *zaisang* B. Shonkhorov advocated for the reform of the Lama's election procedure as they argued that since sometimes "chief *Bagshis* there are persons who are not very worthy of this calling", the pool of candidates should be expanded beyond *ulus bagshis* to include all *gelongs*.³⁶⁹ On the other hand, Tumen and Shonkhorov argued against the proportional distribution of voting rights among the Kalmyk *uluses* for the election. They argued that each *ulus* should be allocated an equal number of representatives regardless of population size.³⁷⁰ We should note, here, that Tumen and Shonhorov both belonged to the Aleksander-Baga-Tsokhur *ulus*, which despite its relatively small population made up the largest share of Lamas so far, the proportional distribution of voting rights suggested by Lama Delgerkiev could thus put the Aleksander-Baga-Tsokhur *ulus* at a disadvantage.

When the reform proposals were collected, the Ignat'ev commission convened its sessions in St. Petersburg. The session included government officials, representatives of the Buddhist population as well as a number of academics. As such, the Buriat Buddhists were represented by three laymen and four members of the Buriat Buddhist clergy, including the official head of Buriat Buddhism Bandido Khambo Lama³⁷¹ Ireltuev. The Kalmyk Buddhists' delegation was rather modest in comparison and only consisted of three laymen: *noyon* Tundutov and *zaisangs* Mikhailov and Kharamandzhiev. The mongolists Alexei Pozdneev, Yakov Shismarev, and a doctor of Tibetan medicine of Buriat origin Pavel Badmaev provided the commission with their academic expertise.³⁷² Another important representative of

³⁶⁹ Ibid.: 33b: в старшие Бакши попадают лица мало достойные призвания.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.: 33a-33b.

³⁷¹ The honorary title of chief priest of the Buriat Buddhists.

³⁷² RGIA: 821: 133: 414: 42a-42b.

Buddhist interests in the sessions of the Ignat'ev commission was Lama Agvan Dorzhiev. A Russian subject of Buriat origin, Agvan Dorzhiev had an extraordinary career at the court of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Agvan Dorzhiev was one of the tutors of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and had the title of tsannit khambo³⁷³. In 1897 Dorzhiev returned back to Russia with a secret diplomatic mission: to explore the possibility of Russian assistance to Tibet against a British invasion (Andreev 2012, 21-22). He would henceforth become one of the key players in the history of Buddhism in Russia.



Figure 5. Photograph of Agvan Dorzhiev. Courtesy of the National Museum of the Kalmyk Republic.

³⁷³ Refers to an assistant tutor of the Dalai lama, who engages the latter in the philosophical debate. The term “khambo” is a Mongolization of the Tibetan “Khenpo”, meaning the Buddhist abbot or one who has attained high scholastic honors.

Although the Ignat'ev commission invited the Buddhist population to submit their reform proposals and even included them in the discussion to an extent, this did not mean that their demands would necessarily be met. The proposals submitted by the Kalmyks as well as the Buriats, were discussed in a very detailed memorandum composed by one of the members of the special commission, Vladimir Cherevansky. The memorandum was filled with anti-clerical sentiments, in which Cherevansky argued that "it is the responsibility of the authorities to shield [...]" the Buddhist population from exploitation at the hands of the Buddhist clergy.³⁷⁴ However, Cherevansky did also consider making concessions, for instance he was not opposed to reforming the Lama's selection procedures, or to the printing of religious works, nor did he take issue with the importing of medicine from abroad. Yet, he, undoubtedly, supported and argued for a continuation of the government's restrictive measures towards the Buddhist clergy. Cherevansky put particular emphasis on the need to restrict the number of Buddhist monks and also strongly opposed the idea that the laity should be allowed to live in the monasteries. Cherevansky stressed that Kalmyk monks must be proficient in the Russian language, and went so far as to suggest that those who do not speak Russian, be banned from the posts of Lama and *bagshi*. Discussing the Kalmyk and Buriat proposals at great length, the Ignat'ev commission, did not come to a clear conclusion. The only obvious change was that the Kalmyks and Buriats would from that point on be referred to as Lamaist-Buddhists.³⁷⁵ On May 28th, 1906 the special commission was closed, as all the legislative reviews and discussions were to be conducted in the Duma.

By announcing the December 1904 decree, the Russian government itself had inadvertently encouraged public activism from the followers of "foreign confessions". The number of proposals submitted by the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and laity illustrated the growing tendency to actively engage in a dialogue with the administration to shape the new regulations on the religious order. Indeed, all of these facts seem to point to a growing level of political consciousness and civic activism on the part of the Kalmyks, contrary to some of the extant research that claims that the Kalmyk *sangha* only began to take active part in socio-

³⁷⁴ RGIA: 821: 138: 115: 1a-3b: обязанность власти ограждать [...]

³⁷⁵ RGIA: 821: 150: 425: 13a-38b.

political life after the 1917 February Revolution (Ochirov 2008, 27-28). The Kalmyks requested not just a comprehensive reform of existing laws but also the modification of administrative practices that infringed on the religious freedom granted to them by the Russian sovereigns.³⁷⁶ Anticipating the reforms, the Buddhist population attempted to make its voice heard and demanded it be taken into account in the process of legislative reform.

The nature of the Kalmyk petitions and requests also illustrated a growing problem within the empire's religion-centered framework. The legal and administrative system that was introduced by the 1847 Provision assumed that the Lama was the highest religious hierarch who would manage Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. However, at the same time, the Lama was part of the imperial administrative apparatus and was accountable to and paid by the imperial government. Therefore, a growing distrust of some members of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and laity towards the holder of the Lama's post and the decisions, actions and judgements that came from Lama undermined this whole power structure.

6.3. Freedom of Conscience on the Ground: Demands and Limits

The Kalmyk *sangha's* growing engagement with the Russian government was not exclusive to questions of Buddhism's legal standing in the empire. While some members of the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity were preoccupied with being included in the reviewing process of Buddhist legislative reform, others used their newly enshrined freedom of conscience to address the question of their immediate religious needs. Inspired by the December 1904 and April 1905 decrees, the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and laity submitted many requests. These Kalmyk requests challenged the existing religious order, as they increasingly contested the rules on Kalmyk Buddhism laid out in the 1847 Provision.

Many Kalmyk requests demanded the reopening of old and construction of new *khuruls*, as well as the approval of monastic appointments. However, contrary to the 1847 Provision according to which monasteries and *sangha* could only be financially supported

³⁷⁶ RGIA: 821: 10: 19: 31a-32b.

through voluntary donations³⁷⁷, in August 1905 the Kalmyks from the Iki-Chonos clan of the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus* asked to finance the construction of a new *khurul* with treasury funds.³⁷⁸ In another instance, contrary to the 1847 Provision's rule that tied the Kalmyk *sangha* to their respective *khuruls* and distinctly prohibited them to reside among the laity³⁷⁹, the Kalmyks from Alexander-Baga-Tsokhur *ulus* sent three separate requests asking to allow two Buddhist monks – *getsul* Tse-Boldan Dobgaev and *manzhi* Shirip Noranov – to reside near the Kamyziak, Chagan, and Bakhtemir fishing villages. It is important to note that at the time of this request, *gelong* Zambo Zambaev (or Zodba Zodbaev) already enjoyed exception from the rule and resided near the fishing villages. However, the Aleksander-Baga-Tsokhur Kalmyks argued that due to his old age, *gelong* Zambo Zambaev was unable to provide all the required religious services, and thus, required another monk to assist him.³⁸⁰

Another target of criticism was the distribution of Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries and monks set by the 1847 Provision. Even prior to the edicts from December 1904 and April 1905, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity complained that the 1847 staff quota did not reflect the reality on the ground and could no longer satisfy the religious needs of Kalmyk population. In a letter to the Minister of Interior they emphasized that from the time of adoption of the 1847 Provision fifty years have passed, and the situation in the Kalmyk steppes has changed.³⁸¹ Indeed, as was argued by Erendzhen Karmykov, a brother of *gelong* Bova Karmykov who during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922) briefly held the post of Lama, the population change led to an uneven distribution of *khuruls* and the *sangha* between different *uluses*. The Baga-Derbet *ulus* with a large territory and population of 4500 yurts, only had four *khuruls*; while Aleksander *ulus*, whose population stood at only 1800 yurt was allowed five *khuruls*, three of which were shut down due to a lack of *sangha*.³⁸² A similar complaint was presented by the chief *bagshi* of Iki-Derbet *ulus* Dordzhe Setenov, who requested

³⁷⁷ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 365.

³⁷⁸ NARK: 9: 5: 1238: 72a-73b.

³⁷⁹ PSZ II, Vol. 22, (1847), No 21144: 365-367.

³⁸⁰ RGIA: 821: 10: 19: 4a-9b.

³⁸¹ RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 50a-52b.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

permission to open a new prayer house to keep up with the increase in population of the Baga-Burul clan.³⁸³

As the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity intensified their campaign of demands and requests, the regional administration faced new challenges. While the government promised the population “freedom of conscience”, it did not issue further instructions to the regional administration regarding implementation. Hence, due to the lack of clear instructions, the interpretations and implementations of the government’s decrees differed depending on which particular official one asked. As such, Astrakhan Governor major-general Bronislav Grombchevskii and the Chief Curator of the Kalmyk People Obolenskii decided to wait until St. Petersburg issued further instructions regarding the government’s new religious policies, hence they ordered the *ulus* curators to temporarily suspend the removal of illegal and unsanctioned Buddhist clergymen that were detected during the 1903 *khurul* inspections.³⁸⁴ Stavropol Governor Aleksandr Vel’iaminov interpreted the April 1905 manifesto differently yet again. In fact, Governor Vel’iaminov overturned his original decision and permitted chief *bagshi* Dordzhe Setenov and the other representatives of Iki-Derbet *ulus* to construct a new prayer house. He noted that since the April 1905 decree granted freedom of conscience, he currently cannot object to requests of opening Buddhist prayer houses.³⁸⁵

While some members of the regional administration were hesitant to approve any requests that violated the existing legislation on Buddhism, the central authorities were more lenient. In December 1905, Minister of Interior Petr Durnovo personally wrote to the Astrakhan Governor that because of the October 1905 Manifesto, he agreed to reassign one small *khurul* from Aleksandr *ulus* to the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus*.³⁸⁶ In 1908, contrary to the Astrakhan Governor’s recommendation, the Minister of Interior permitted Lama Chimid Baldanov to promote and appoint new Buddhist monks, despite the fact that

³⁸³ Ibid.: 47a-48b.

³⁸⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 1732: 11a-11b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1788: 10a-11b.

³⁸⁵ RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 70a-72 b; 76; 85a-85b.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.: 93-94b.

most *surgulin-kobun* did not speak Russian.³⁸⁷ Minister Durnovo himself noted that previously these types of petitions would all rejected by both civil and Buddhist clerical authorities, but nowadays following the edict from April 17th and October 1905 Manifesto, those petitions had to be granted.³⁸⁸

As they became increasingly aware of the fact that the central authorities were now more likely to grant their petitions, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity further challenged the existing religious order. More and more petitions violated the chain of command. Bypassing the Lama and regional administration, Kalmyk petitions and requests landed directly in St. Petersburg. Current research argues that in general, Kalmyk petitions to St. Petersburg were successful. Dordzhieva (2012, 152) points out that the Russian Revolution of 1905-1907 and “sporadic demonstrations of masses” in the Kalmyk steppes caused the government to make certain concessions to Kalmyk religious demands. She even goes so far as to state that in the early twentieth century the government granted all requests presented by the Kalmyk *sangha* (Dordzhieva 2012, 145). Komandzhaev (1992, 145) notes that in the aftermath of the April 1905 decree the imperial government relaxed its restrictive religious policies and made several concessions to Kalmyk religious requests to prevent the spread of nationalist movements among the Kalmyks. However, Komandzhaev’s argument behind the government’s motivation, the prevention of a nationalist movement among the Kalmyks, remains questionable. Indeed, in the documents of the Kalmyk administrative bodies, we cannot find any evidence of such concerns. Dordzhieva’s argument about Kalmyk demonstrations could also not be confirmed. In fact, in 1907 the Astrakhan Governor argued that “there can be no question of any nationalist, anti-government tendencies among the Kalmyk clergy. Both the clergy and the Kalmyk people, for the most part, are deeply faithful to the Russian State, and have not once wavered in times of general unrest and treason against the Fatherland.”³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ NARK: I-9: 5: 1788: 124b; RGIA: 821: 10: 19: 4a-9b.

³⁸⁸ RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 88a-90a.

³⁸⁹ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 35b-36a: о каких либо националистических, противуправительственных тенденциях в среде калмыцкого духовенства не может быть речи. Как оно, так и калмыцкий народ в громадном своем

I would argue that, although certain relaxations of restrictions over Kalmyk Buddhist affairs were, indeed, granted in the aftermath of the 1904-1905 decrees and manifestos, it would be an overstatement to call it true “freedom of conscience”. Religious freedoms were delimited by specific borders and limits. Particularly, the limits of the “freedom of conscience” could be seen in the government’s attitudes towards construction, renovation and reopening of *khuruls* and towards the appointments and promotions of Buddhist *sangha*. Komandzhaev (1992, 145-146) and Orlova (2007, 314) both noted an increase in the official number of *khuruls* and prayer houses, which according to them was the result of the relaxation of government restrictions. However, in reality, many of the monasteries that were “officially” opened in the early twentieth century were in fact illegal *khuruls* that had been functioning for dozens and, in some cases, hundreds of years. The regional authorities were well aware of this fact, and chose to grant the requests to officially “open” these *khuruls*.³⁹⁰ Hence, when agreeing to open new *khuruls* or prayer houses, the authorities were, in fact, closing the gap between discrepancies in officially allowed quota and the actual situation in the Kalmyk steppes. Examples of such cases include: the small Arshi *khurul* in Yandik-Mochag *ulus*, the great Bogdo-Dalai Lamin *khurul* and Lamrim-Cheling *khurul* in Manych *ulus*.³⁹¹

Although one might assume that opening *khuruls* and appointing new staff monks to serve in these *khuruls* were two logically inseparable sides of the same coin, for the imperial government this was not the case. As such, while the government saw no issue with opening new, or legalizing old *khuruls*, they frequently refused to appoint new staff monks, and would order to fill the positions by moving staff Buddhist monks from other *khuruls*. In Iki-Dokzmannin *khurul*, the emperor ordered the transfer staff Buddhist monks from different *khuruls*.³⁹² A similar situation occurred in the great Bogdo-Dalai-Lamin *khurul* that was officially closed down in 1854. The Minister of Interior personally wrote to the Astrakhan Governor that following the April 1905 edict he would allow the reopening of the great

большинстве преданы Русскому Государству, и не разу не поколебались в пору общих смут и измены Отечеству.

³⁹⁰ RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 134a-135b.

³⁹¹ NARK: I-9: 5: 2326: 30a-34b.

³⁹² Ibid.: 36a.

Bogdo-Dalai-Lamin *khurul*. However, the Minister refused to appoint staff monks, and required religious rituals and prayers to be performed by monks from other *khuruls*. In this way the number of Kalmyk *sangha* remained at the levels set by the 1847 staff quotas.³⁹³

The promise of amending existing legislation on Buddhism also did not necessarily imply the relaxation of restrictions imposed upon the *sangha*. In fact, the restrictions on the number of Kalmyk Buddhist monks remained in force, and thus continued to be at the forefront of the disagreements between the government and the Kalmyks. Furthermore, the administration remained committed to the idea that newly appointed Kalmyk monks would have to be proficient in the Russian language. As very few candidates satisfied this demand, the number of official staff monks continued to be significantly lower than set by the 1847 quota. As such, according to Lama Chimid Baldanov, in 1906, there were five-hundred fewer monks than the number sanctioned by the law.³⁹⁴ Indeed, according to official records in 1906 there were 1067 monks, and in 1907 there were 1087.³⁹⁵ Lama Chimid Baldanov argued it “became very difficult to perform rituals” and that the clergy may well gradually disappear.³⁹⁶ The Department of Foreign Confessions, however, remained steadfastly dedicated to its position. The Department mostly refused to appoint *surgulin-kobun* as official Buddhist clergymen, arguing that the rule demanding Russian language proficiency had been introduced almost three decades ago and the requirements are clearly stated.³⁹⁷ Even in exceptional cases, when Lama Baldanov asked to appoint Basan Tsebekov, a student of deceased Lama Dzhimbe-Baldan Delgerkiev, to *manzhi*, the Kalmyk Administration denied the Lama’s request. The Kalmyk Administration argued that despite the 1905 April manifesto and the ongoing review of legislation on Buddhism, until new information and orders from St. Petersburg would be issued, all the previous rules regarding Kalmyk Buddhism have to be followed as before.³⁹⁸

³⁹³ NARK: I-9: 5: 1732: 21a-25b.

³⁹⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 1788: 29a-29b.

³⁹⁵ NAR: I-9: 5: 1732: 13a, 33a-34a.

³⁹⁶ NARK: I-9: 5: 1788: 29a-29b: очень затрудняет в исполнении разного рода религиозных обрядов.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: 96a-100b.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 10a-11b, 13a.

As the imperial government and administration continued to impose limitations on Kalmyk Buddhism contrary to the promises of the 1905 Manifesto, the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha*, on their part, also continued to resist the existing regulations. The Lama disobeyed the direct order from the Minister of Interior to choose a *khurul* that was to be moved from Aleksander to the southern part of Baga-Derbet *ulus*. The Lama argued that the Kalmyk laity and the *sangha* must make this decision, not him.³⁹⁹ In another example, all *bagshis* of all *khuruls* in all of the *uluses* refused to send clergy to serve in the great Bogdo-Dalai Lamin *khurul* of Baga-Derbet *ulus*.⁴⁰⁰ In a third case, the Lama disobeyed a direct order from the Minister of Interior, and as a result, the religious services and rituals in the great Bogdo-Dalai-Lamin *khurul* were not performed by the staff Buddhist clergy from other *khuruls*, but by local *surgulin-kobun*.⁴⁰¹ The *ulus* inspections also revealed a great number of illegal monasteries and clergy. Thus, in 1907 the Kalmyk administration discovered an illegal *khurul* in the Kelket clan of Baga-Derbet *ulus* where seventeen monks without officially issued charters were performing Buddhist rituals.⁴⁰²

In the early twentieth century, following the government's promise of freedom of conscience, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity forwarded dozens of petitions requesting to remove restrictions on Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. While the petitions targeted various issues from the uneven distribution of monasteries and monks among the Kalmyk *uluses*, to the Russian language requirements that were imposed on the Buddhist monks, the underlying themes and their use of language illustrated the Kalmyks' increasing awareness of the outdated nature of the existing rules that governed Kalmyk Buddhism. While attempting to achieve their objectives through official channels, the Kalmyk *sangha* thus continued to disobey and undermine the existing rules governing Buddhism.

It was of course in no small part due to the outdated governing system and restrictive laws that a degree of general decline set in among the Buddhist clergy. The combination of

³⁹⁹ RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 135a-135b.

⁴⁰⁰ NARK: I-9: 5: 1732: 47a-48a.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.: 50a-50b.

⁴⁰² NARK: I-9: 5: 1477: 24a.

this sense of decay and the renewed contacts with the rest of the Buddhist world, in turn, would set in motion a wave of religious innovation.

6.4. Embracing Innovation: The Renovationalist Movement and Monastic Education

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, at the turn of the twentieth century movements towards religious innovation among both adherents and clerics of different faiths increased in Russia. The interest in religious innovation concerned such different aspects as religious institutions, rituals, beliefs, and the laity's engagement. The Kalmyk *sangha* and laity also demonstrated an increased level of engagement with the imperial authorities regarding various questions concerning Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. However, in addition, the Kalmyk *sangha* was also undergoing internal changes: The early twentieth century saw the genesis of a Buddhist renovationalist movement (Russian: *obnovlenchestvo*) that pursued a renewal of Buddhist traditions.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a perception of decay of Buddhist knowledge came to be increasingly present in Kalmyk monastic and lay circles. Various accounts agree that there were three main causes for this decay. The first reason was the long separation from the Buddhist centers in Inner Asia. The second reason was the inadequate system of instruction that caused the Kalmyks to lose "true" Buddhist tradition. Indeed, the yurt of each *gelong* was akin to a separate school, and Buddhist knowledge had been preserved and passed on through oral tradition and through sacred texts brought along by the Kalmyks during their westward migration and by the Kalmyks who had gone on pilgrimages in the early days of their time in the Caspian steppes (Smirnov [1879]1999, 25; Spasskii 1894, 10).⁴⁰³ These methods of knowledge preservation and a disparate system of monastic education could not be considered particularly efficient, and undoubtedly would not suffice to maintain an adequate level of religious knowledge. The third and final reason was the corruption of the Kalmyk Buddhist tradition through Russia's involvement in Kalmyk religious affairs and

⁴⁰³ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 37b.

Russian influence at large (Spasskii 1894, 6-9; Zhitetskii 1893, 58).⁴⁰⁴ Of course, it could be said that the first reason was also brought about by imperial policies, as the government pressured the Kalmyks to sever their contacts with Tibet in the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the sources do not explicitly establish this causal link.

Closely linked to the decay of Buddhist knowledge was the issue of corruption of Buddhist tradition, manifested in two ways: through the decay of the *sangha* and the loss of the laity's respect for the *sangha*. Thus, multiple accounts point to the violation of the *Vinay*⁴⁰⁵ rules and the low level of morality in the Kalmyk Buddhist monastic community. Russian diplomat Esper Ukhtomskii during his travels in the Astrakhan steppe noted that in a small *khurul* near Astrakhan several Kalmyk Buddhist monks demonstrated Buddhist rituals and showed religious objects to travellers for a small payment. According to Ukhtomskii (1891, 20), those Buddhist monks "could not answer even simple questions regarding their religion" and "were drunk when performing a sacred ritual". A student of St. Petersburg University's Oriental Faculty, Anatoli Bordzhinkevich, during his travels through Yandik-Mochag *ulus* in 1909, met a drunk *bagshi*, Senkiev of Iki-Bagut *khurul*. And Orthodox missionary, Jacob Dubrova, left an account of a grand religious ceremony performed in Iki-Derbet *ulus* to appease Buddha Shakyamuni. When asked, one Kalmyk layman that participated in this ceremony emphasized that the ritual was necessary because Buddha Shakyamuni "turned away from the Kalmyks because they defiled their tradition and beliefs [...], stopped following the traditions and customs of their fathers, and were becoming slowly similar to *oros* (Kalmyk: *Russian*), [...]" (Dubrova 1898, 126-127).

While one could, undoubtedly, argue that the accounts left by Russian officials and missionaries could be both biased and exaggerated, there are other accounts that also mention Kalmyk Buddhism's decay. In his memoirs, Agvan Dorzhiev wrote that when visiting the Kalmyks he witnessed the inappropriate behavior of the Kalmyk *sangha*, noticed their inadequate knowledge of Buddhist teaching, and alcohol abuse. Agvan Dorzhiev emphasized

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.: 37b-38b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1376: 14a.

⁴⁰⁵ A Buddhist canonical text with a set of rules for the *sangha*.

that among the Kalmyk *sangha* “immorality completely decimates the meaning of religion” (2003: 55).⁴⁰⁶

In 1916 Bovan Badma, the first Kalmyk monk who was awarded a degree of Doctor of Buddhist Philosophy – *lharamba* – from the Drepung Gomang monastery in Tibet, published a short book, advocating a return to “pure Buddhism” by reminding the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* and laity of the morals their religion espoused. The book also particularly condemned Kalmyk *bagshis*, denouncing their inability to edify younger Kalmyk monks as they, *bagshis*, themselves were ignorant and corrupt (Bovan [1916]2005, 24-25). Specifically, the chapter entitled “The Song to *Bagshi*” stated: “Masters that pretend to be Buddha’s students, unfortunately, do not adhere to the foundations of his religion. Masters who preach about the benefits of good deeds, unfortunately, are not capable of explaining the basics of their own religion. Masters who preach about the benefits of offerings, unfortunately, are not capable of providing guidance [...]” (Bovan [1916]2005, 24-26).

Thus, we can conclude that diverse accounts point in the same direction, namely that Kalmyk Buddhism was slowly entering a state of decay at the end of the nineteenth – early twentieth century. In order to remedy the situation, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity frequently requested the imperial government to return to previous traditional practices and pleaded for decreased dependence of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy on the Russian administration.⁴⁰⁷ However, it would be Russia’s geopolitical interest in Inner Asia that facilitated a shift in the government’s attitudes towards Buddhism. A shift which would greatly impact Kalmyk Buddhist affairs.

The eastward shift of Russia’s geopolitical interests, and the subsequent relaxation of the ban on Kalmyk contacts with other Buddhist regions outside of Russia contributed to the development of religious innovation and a cultural renaissance of sorts among the Kalmyks.⁴⁰⁸ For the first time in over a hundred years, Kalmyk Buddhism was opened up to

⁴⁰⁶ NARK: I-9: 2: 77: 11a-15b; 19a-19b.

⁴⁰⁷ NARK: I-9: 5: 307: 87a-87b; NARK: I-9: 5: 2667: 123a-123b; 132a-132b; RGIA: 1291: 85: 211: 9b-10b.

⁴⁰⁸ NARK: I-9: 2: 77: 1a-1b; RGIA: 821: 133: 414: 7a-7b.

influxes of fresh knowledge and information from outside. The Kalmyk clergy and laity who were able to visit other Buddhist centers in Inner Asia brought back new ideas. Some returned after acquiring a monastic education in Tibetan monasteries. The external and internal circumstances facilitated the possibility of considering a renewal of Kalmyk Buddhism, first and foremost through education.

It will come as no surprise, then, that attempts to reform Buddhist monastic education were undertaken by a Kalmyk who was exposed to the Buddhist world outside the Kalmyk steppes – the Baga-Derbet *bagshi* Baaza Menkedzhuev (1846-1903), more commonly known as Baaza-*bagshi*. In 1898, after returning from his travels in Tibet, Baaza-*bagshi* founded the first Buddhist philosophical college or *Tsanit Choira* in his native Dundu-*khurul* in the Nugra region of Baga-Derbet *ulus*.⁴⁰⁹ *Tsanit choira*⁴¹⁰, known as *Tsanit-datsan* among the Buriats, was an academy for the critical study of Buddhist philosophy (Baradiin 1992, 95). While *Tsanit choira* academies existed among the Buriats – according to Baradiin the first academy was opened in 1845 in Tsugol *dastan*, for the Kalmyks, Baaza-*bagshi*'s academy was the first such school (Baradiin 1992, 80-81). Although the academy ceased to exist after the death of its founder in 1903 (Dordzhieva 2014, 138)⁴¹¹, it marked the first step in a series of Kalmyk attempts to reform Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education. This attempt was to be furthered and promoted by Agvan Dorzhiev.

Lama Agvan Dorzhiev was one of the main advocates of the Buddhist renovationist movement in Russia. Already in 1898 during his first visit to Russia, Dorzhiev visited Baaza-*bagshi* in Dundu *khurul* of Baga-Derbet *ulus*. Dorzhiev also travelled around the Kalmyk *uluses* and performed Buddhist rituals and prayers, and in return collected vast offerings (Shantaev 2008, 44). The Kalmyk *sangha* and laity paid great respect to Agvan Dorzhiev, and his arrival caused great concern among the imperial administration. In fact, Astrakhan Governor Mikhail fon Gazenkampf asked the Minister of State Properties to prohibit Dorzhiev from visiting the

⁴⁰⁹ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 37b-38b; NARK: I-9: 2: 77: 5a-6b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1367: 2a.

⁴¹⁰ While literally meaning 'faculty of philosophy', we will, at times, use the term in combination with the noun 'academy' for reasons of readability.

⁴¹¹ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 37b-38b.

Kalmyks, and argued that the goal of Dorzhiev's visit was "to exploit the people's religious feelings and extort money".⁴¹² However, the government, and particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a strong interest in maintaining good relations with Agvan Dorzhiev due to his influence at the Dalai Lama's court, hence the regional administration was forced to tolerate Dorzhiev's presence. Dorzhiev's activities in Kalmykia were examined in more detail in the works of Dorzhieva (1994), Ochirov (2008), Omakaeva (1994), and Shantaev (2008). However, as the focus of this dissertation is Kalmyk Buddhism, I only discuss Agvan Dorzhiev's activities insofar as it makes a direct contribution to unpacking our research questions.

Russia's interest in Inner Asia and the relaxation of restrictions on Kalmyk contacts with co-religionists abroad created a conducive environment for and facilitated the possibility of reform of Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education. According to the *bagshi* of the Manych and Baga-Derbet *uluses*, the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy have been discussing possible ways of improving religious education for years. However, plans actually turned into concrete actions only after a group of Kalmyk laity and Buddhist clergymen visited the Dalai Lama in Mongolia in 1905. As noted by the *bagshi* of the Baga-Derbet and Manych *uluses*, the Dalai Lama expressed the idea that "Buddhists without education from a "Tsanit Choira" cannot be of benefit to their country and people."⁴¹³ When the Kalmyks who visited the Dalai Lama passed his words to the Kalmyk people, the Kalmyks from the northern and southern parts of Baga-Derbet ulus asked the Dalai Lama for advice on how to proceed with the establishment of the Tsannit Choira. To assist the Kalmyks with this endeavor, the Dalai Lama sent Agvan Dorzhiev with specific instructions also regarding the location for the establishment of the *Choir*a.⁴¹⁴

In 1904-1905, Agvan Dorzhiev began preparations for the *Tsanit Choira*.⁴¹⁵ Support for the academy came from different sources within Russia, but also from abroad. Wealthy and influential Kalmyk monks and laymen provided funds. The building of Baaza-*bagshi*'s

⁴¹² NARK: I-9: 2: 77: 3a-3b: эксплуатировать религиозные чувства людей и вымогать деньги.

⁴¹³ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 47b- 48b; NARK: I-9: 5: 1376: 14a-14b: буддисты, без образования "Цанит Чойра", не могут принести желаемую пользу своей стране и народу.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 2a.

academy was donated by *noyon* Tundutov and was moved from the Nugra area to the Amta-Burgusta area.⁴¹⁶ Agvan Dorzhiev himself together with *gelong* Karmykov and layman Shantaev donated funds to build student housing.⁴¹⁷ Agvan Dorzhiev also gave the school three-hundred volumes of *Kangyur*⁴¹⁸ and numerous Buddha statues (Andreev 1992, 156). Additionally, Dorzhiev also donated five thousand rubles to open a bakery and a shop of which the annual income would contribute to the academy's subsistence.⁴¹⁹ Furthermore, the Buriat's Atsagat *dastan*⁴²⁰ donated one-hundred-and-eight volumes, and the Dalai Lama himself donated thirty volumes of *Kangyur*.⁴²¹

In July 1907, a second *Tsanit Choira* was founded at the Second Iki-Chonkorling *khurul* of Iki-Tsokhur *ulus*, and later was moved to the Sanzyr area. The funds for the construction of this *Tsanit Choira* came from wealthy persons of Iki-Tsokhur *ulus* Dzhak Gakov, Ulumdzhi Lidzhiev, *zaisang* Ceren Badmaev and *gelong* Dzhomik. And already by August 1907, twenty-five yurts of students were posted near the Iki-Tsokhur *Tsanit Choira* to begin their education.⁴²²

While the establishment of the *Tsanit Choira*, undoubtedly, illustrated the new tendencies among some of the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* and laity to embrace religious innovation, not all members of the monastic community were in favor of change – radical or moderate. This modernization of Buddhist monastic education through the establishment of *Tsanit Choiras* caused a divide among the Kalmyk *sangha* into two camps: modernists or renovationists (Russian: *obnovlentsy*) led by Agvan Dorzhiev and conservatives led by the Lama of the Kalmyk People, Dzhimbe-Baldan Delgerkiev. Although I will discuss the Kalmyk renovationist movement only within the timeframe determined at the outset of my dissertation, which ends in 1917, it is important to note that the Kalmyk Buddhist

⁴¹⁶ NARK: I-9: 5: 1376: 2b.

⁴¹⁷ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 18a.

⁴¹⁸ The Tibetan Buddhist canon that entails words supposedly spoken by Buddha himself.

⁴¹⁹ NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 16a.

⁴²⁰ A term for a stationary Buddhist monastery in the Buriat Buddhism.

⁴²¹ NARK: I-9: 5: 1376: 2a.

⁴²² NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 2a-3b, 6a-6b.

renovationist movement and its confrontation with the conservative Kalmyk *sangha* became even more pronounced in the 1920-1930s. The works of Arltan Baskhaev (2007) and Galina Dordzhieva (2001) examine this topic in more detail.

The Lama and a group of conservative monks felt uneasy about the arrival of Agvan Dorzhiev, whose status as a representative of the Dalai Lama provided him with extraordinary influence over the Kalmyk population (Ochirova 2009, 50; Snelling 1994, 90-91). Indeed, the mere fact that Dorzhiev performed public rituals, awarded monastic ordinations, and criticized the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy in itself already represented interference in the Lama's prerogative. Additionally, the foundation of *Tsanit Choiras* without consulting the Lama first could be viewed as a direct violation of the Lama's authority over his domain. In his memoirs, Agvan Dorzhiev mentioned that Lama Delgerkiev objected to the opening of the *Tsanit Choira* and even attempted to obstruct its establishment. Lama Delgerkiev argued that one must not establish a *Tsanit Choira* where there was never a tradition of having such a school, and stressed that the *Tsanit Choira* did not suit the needs of a nomadic people that live in yurts (Dorzhiev 2003, 54).

It is important to note that the preparations preceding the opening of both *Tsanit Choira* academies began without requesting permission from Russian authorities. Only after finalizing the initial preparations did the Kalmyks and Agvan Dorzhiev petition the administration to legalize the school.⁴²³ On April 10th, 1907, after their meeting, the representatives from Baga-Derbet *ulus* petitioned to legalize the *Tsanit Choira* because it could greatly "increase the moral spirit of the Buddhist clergy".⁴²⁴ As was the case before, the Kalmyks' regard for imperial rules and procedures was limited at best.

Anne Hansen in her study of the Buddhist modernization movement in French colonial Cambodia noted how the colonial authorities greatly supported the development of modernized Buddhist education (2007, 111-120). In 1909 the French colonial administration established the first Pali school with a reviewed curriculum and a system of examinations that

⁴²³ AV IVR RAN: 44: 1: 126: 40b.

⁴²⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 1376: 10a-11b: поднять нравственность духовенства.

included a colonial representative as one of the invigilators. The colonial administration also promoted modernized Buddhist monastic education by issuing a decree that made passing an exam in a Pali school necessary for appointments in the higher monastic ranks (Hansen 2007,131-133). Thus, the French colonial administration, too, preferred to deal with monks educated according to a clear Buddhist curriculum rather than having to deal with those of a more esoteric ilk. The Russian government also chose to support the reform of Buddhist monastic education. This support, however, was different in nature as well as in its objectives.

As the *Tsanit Choira* academies were eventually legalized, it is reasonable to assume that Russian officialdom did not oppose the establishment of *Tsanit Choira* in part because it was more akin to generally systematized educational establishments that existed in other parts of the Empire. Their functioning was far easier to understand and record as the *Tsanit Choira* had charters, curricula, financial records, and a list of teachers and administrators. Furthermore, the imperial government believed that a more educated Buddhist clergy would be more likely to embrace Russian culture, and it was believed that this was a way to develop a backward nomadic people. Indeed, Russian authorities supported the establishment of the *Tsanit Choira*, arguing that the government shares the school's goal "to raise the cultural level of the Kalmyk clergy".⁴²⁵ According to the Department of Foreign Confessions, the establishment of religious academies was not just preferable, but necessary, to increase the level of education of Kalmyk Buddhist clergy, which at that time was far from advanced.⁴²⁶ Although not pleased with the establishment of both schools without his initial permission, the Chief Curator, nevertheless, lent his support to the *Tsanit Choira*. In fact, he excused the unauthorized construction, blaming it on the Kalmyks' misinterpretation of the April 17th, 1904 Manifesto as a complete cancelation of government control over the religions of Russia's non-Orthodox peoples.⁴²⁷

Although central authorities claimed to share the goal of raising the educational level of Buddhist monks, in fact, their understanding of what this goal was, differed considerably.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.: 3b: поднятие уровня культурности калмыцкого духовенства.

⁴²⁶ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 1a.

⁴²⁷ NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 1a-2b; 6a-6b.

The account on the matter written by renowned Mongolist and curator of Baga-Derbet *ulus* Sergei Kozin, who was also a strong supporter of the *Tsanit Choira*, most adequately expresses this discrepancy: “Independently from the moral side of the issue, I tend to look at the introduction of educational order for the Kalmyk clergy and bringing order to their monastic life, first of all as a way of facilitating a gradual reduction of their numbers. Since an increase in demands [required for monkhood] will usually lead to an increase in those unable to fulfill those demands.”⁴²⁸ So in the end the government’s support for Buddhist educational reform was not merely informed by their aim to modernize the *sangha*, but also by their continued striving to reduce the Buddhist clergy’s numbers and diminish their influence.

The support for Buddhist monastic education, and the legalization of two unauthorized Buddhist academies did not mean that the authorities were about to relax their control. One of the conditions for the final legalization of the academies was the approval of each of their charters. The Department of Foreign Confessions instructed the Lama to develop a charter, the latter however refused, and the task fell to Agvan Dorzhiev and a group of reform-minded Kalmyks.⁴²⁹

The Charter was developed by communal forces that included the chief *bagshi* of the Baga-Derbet *ulus* Ubushi Muzaev, chief *bagshi* of the Iki-Tsokhur *ulus* Koru Shuguldikov and *gelong* Bova Karmykov, Agvan Dorzhiev and the curator of the northern part of the Baga-Derbet *ulus* Sergei Andreevich Kozin.⁴³⁰ After the charter was finalized, it was presented to all *bagshis* of all Baga-Derbet *khuruls* for further approval.⁴³¹ This level of co-operation between representatives of different *khuruls* in itself represents a new development in Kalmyk Buddhism. Considering that each chief *bagshi* was the sole hierarch in his *ulus*, and there were not usually any open interactions between *bagshis* of different *uluses* or even

⁴²⁸ NARK: I-9: 5: 1892: 1b-2: независимо от моральной стороны дела, склонен смотреть на введение образовательного ценза для калмыцкого духовенства и упорядочение его монастырского быта прежде всего как на средство к постепенному сокращению его численности, потому что при повышении уровня требований увеличивается обыкновенно и количество неспособных удовлетворить данные требования.

⁴²⁹ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 6a.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.: 34a.

⁴³¹ NARK: I-9: 5: 1892: 1a-1b.

khuruls, this endeavor indicates that the reform of Buddhist monastic education enjoyed significant support. Thus, the usually rather segregated hierarchical structure of early twentieth century Kalmyk Buddhism began to display a degree of unity. The inclusion of the curator from the Baga-Derbet *ulus*, Sergei Kozin in the founding committee also implies a certain degree of cooperation between the Kalmyk *sangha* and the regional administration on a purely Buddhist matter.

While providing support for a more advanced and systemized Buddhist education, the authorities still had their own ideas and expectations about *Tsanit Choira* academies. The regional administration expected and requested Russian language instruction to be included in the curriculum.⁴³² The administration argued that the official position of the Kalmyk clergy was so important and its interactions with the administration in the steppe so frequent that the lack of Russian language knowledge among Kalmyk *gelongs* caused many difficulties for the administration.⁴³³ As before, the question of the Russian language once again came to the forefront of disagreement between the Kalmyks and the authorities.

As expected, the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy vehemently opposed the inclusion of Russian instruction in the curriculum. Lama Chimid Baldanov, who in 1906 took the post after Dzhimbe-Baldan Delgerkiev's passing, voiced opposition to the inclusion of Russian language teaching at *Tsanit Choira* academies. Lama Baldanov argued that the Buddhist teaching was so profound and difficult that very few were able to master them to a high degree, and adding another language to the curriculum would prevent students from comprehending the truths of Buddhist teaching.⁴³⁴ According to the Astrakhan Governor, who at the time was fulfilling the functions of the Chief Curator of Kalmyk People, Lama Chimid Baldanov's position on Russian language instruction had a significant impact on the rest of the Buddhist clergy.⁴³⁵ Indeed, the arguments against Russian language instruction in the curriculum ranged from parents' stances on the Russian language issue to the incompatibility of the academies'

⁴³² NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 1a-1b, 34a-36b.

⁴³³ NARK: I-9: 5: 1376: 3b.

⁴³⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 10a; NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 22a-23b.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*: 36a.

curricula with Russian language. Indeed, as noted by the *sangha*, Kalmyk parents were unwilling to send their sons to the *Tsanit Choira* fearing “their children will be studying in Russian, which would violate the centuries-old rules of Buddhist religion”.⁴³⁶ Another argument was that the school’s goal “to attain a state of Buddhahood” is not compatible with the fundamentally worldly matter of learning Russian. In the end, the *bagshis* of all Baga-Derbet *khuruls* wrote a joint letter to the curator of Baga-Derbet *ulus* opposing Russian language classes in the name of both *sangha* and laity.⁴³⁷ After a lengthy discussion, Russian was included in the curriculum of the Baga-Derbet *Tsanit Choira*, however, only starting from the ninth out of thirteen grades. In the Iki-Tsokhur *Tsanit Choira*, Russian was not a compulsory course.⁴³⁸ Nevertheless, it is important to note that the sources point out that in reality no Russian classes were offered at all, despite the officially approved curriculum stating otherwise.

The Department of Spiritual Affairs ratified the charter of the Baga-Derbet *Tsanit Choira* in 1908 and the Iki-Tsokhur charter in 1909.⁴³⁹ The charters stipulated a thirteen-year educational program. The Baga-Derbet academy could accommodate 120-150 students, whereas the Iki-Tsokhur academy was larger and could house and instruct 150 to 300 students.⁴⁴⁰ However, archival documents point out that following their foundation neither of the *Tsanit Choira* academies ran at full capacity.⁴⁴¹

The *Tsanit Choiras* were open to the most talented *surgulin-kobun* aged between fifteen and twenty-five years old, who knew Tibetan (as all education was in Tibetan), and who had passed an exam on Buddhist teaching in their home *khuruls*. The Baga-Derbet *Tsanit Choira* only accepted students from Baga-Derbet *ulus*, while according to the charter, the Iki-Tsokhur *Tsanit Choira* was also open to students from outside of the Iki-Tsokhur *ulus*. The

⁴³⁶ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 32a-33b, 37a: дети их будут учиться по русски, что нарушает многовековые законы ламайского религии.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.: 32a-33b, 37a.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.: 21b, 28a.

⁴³⁹ NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 10a.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.: 17b, 28b.

⁴⁴¹ NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 29b.

charters specifically stipulated that following the *Vinaya*, students were not allowed to possess any type of luxury goods.⁴⁴² The school curriculum was aimed at standardizing and systematizing higher monastic education. Following the demands of the Chief Curator, both *Tsanit Choira* academies were supported not by taxes collected from the Kalmyks but directly from the *khuruls'* funds.⁴⁴³ Large *khuruls* were supposed to contribute 214 rubles, and small *khuruls* 107 rubles per year. The total annual budget of the academies equaled 2671 rubles.⁴⁴⁴ Although their charters clearly stipulated the origins of their funding, already in June 1909, almost immediately after legalization, the chief *bagshi* of the Baga-Derbet *ulus* at a meeting of the Baga-Derbet *ulus* Kalmyks at Khanata asked for the *Tsanit Choira* to be funded from common Kalmyk capital – at a cost of 1500 rubles annually.⁴⁴⁵ In 1912, three years later, Kalmyks from Burul *aimag* of the Manych *ulus* also petitioned the Kalmyk Administration to support twenty students of the Baga-Derbet academy that came from Burul *aimag* using Kalmyk tax revenues. The Kalmyks from Burul *aimag* argued that due to their dire economic situation, parents were not able to support their children who were studying in the Baga-Derbet *Tsanit Choira*.⁴⁴⁶

The reason behind the desire to fund the *Tsanit Choira* academies from Kalmyk tax revenues was quite obvious. If the new academies were to be funded this way, the *khuruls* and parents would be relieved from the financial burden, which would be divided evenly among the Kalmyk population, not merely of the Baga-Derbet *ulus*, but all Kalmyk *uluses*, since taxes and duties were collected from the whole Kalmyk population. However, both the chief *baghis'* and Baga-Burul Kalmyks' proposals were met with opposition by the Kalmyk Administration.⁴⁴⁷ Referring to the charters, Chief Curator V.E. Loktev stressed that according

⁴⁴² NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 2a-2b, 18a-18b, 20b, 26a.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.: 2a-2b, 18a-18b, 20b, 26a.

⁴⁴⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 22a.

⁴⁴⁵ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818:66a-67 b.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.: 90a-90b.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.: 66a-67b, 90a-90b.

to the rules, the academies were to be funded by the *khuruls* of the Baga-Derbet and Iki-Tsokhur *uluses*.⁴⁴⁸

Both *Tsanit Choiras* were incorporated in the existing governing structures of Kalmyk Buddhism. Although founded neither on the Lama's initiative, nor enjoying his support, his status as the hierarch of Kalmyk Buddhism made him the direct supervisor of both *Tsanit Choiras* academies.⁴⁴⁹ The jurisdiction over the schools belonged to the Department of Foreign Confessions and was to be overseen by the Astrakhan Governor. Thus, though allowing a certain degree of innovation by the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy, the central authorities still subordinated these initiatives to the prevailing structures and chains of command, conservatively maintaining the imperial order of managing Kalmyk Buddhism as it was set in 1847.

Although the *Tsanit Choiras* charters distinctly stipulated the academies' functions, in the end, it remained a piece of paper. While the Iki-Tsokhur *Tsanit Choiras* followed the order stipulated by its charter to the letter,⁴⁵⁰ the Chief Curator of Baga-Derbet *ulus* complained that both the economic and educational side of the Derbet *Tsanit Choiras*'s functioning did not correspond with the adopted Charter and that the financial turnover of the school far exceeded the declared numbers.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless, despite discrepancies in the *Tsanit Choiras*'s function to what was stipulated in the charter, the government, nevertheless, continued to support it. In 1912 the Governor of Astrakhan General-Lieutenant Ivan Nikolaevich Sokolovski, in his letter to the Department of Spiritual Affairs, stressed the benefit of *Tsanit Choiras* academies for the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. As they could provide students with not only training necessary to fulfill their role as monks, but also could "facilitate the intellectual and moral development" of the Buddhist clergy.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.: 95a-96a.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.: 17a-18b, 26a; NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 10b.

⁴⁵⁰ NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 8b.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.: 13a-16a.

⁴⁵² Ibid.: 11a-11b: способствует их интеллектуальному и моральному развитию.

Accounts at the time also note the academies' positive influence on the level of Buddhist education. The curator of Iki-Tsokhur also noted that in his *ulus* at the *Tsanit Choira* a monk receives better education than in a *khurul*.⁴⁵³ Chief Curator of the Kalmyk People, Loktev, noted that some Kalmyk communities already recognized that the students of the *Tsanit Choira* are very different from the old monks; and that the locals have good impressions of the students. The communities were willing to continue to support their *Tsanit Choira* materially, which shows their positive attitude towards its activities.⁴⁵⁴ The Kalmyks of Manych *ulus* argued that "The Spiritual Academy, being a higher educational and spiritual institution, would give the awakening young generation a strong impetus to development and would disperse the atmosphere of sluggishness that had been condensed over the clergy for centuries. The first pupils of the CHOIRA are already showing independence, bringing forward the normal regime over the old clergy and infusing into their environment the radiant light perceived from the CHOIRA, which would make a pleasant impression on the Kalmyk parishioners".⁴⁵⁵ Thus, one might argue that a modest renaissance of Kalmyk Buddhism was underway.

Following the successful legalization of the *Tsanit Choira*, the renovationists among the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy attempted to introduce further reforms. As such, the *sangha* of the southern and northern Baga-Derbet *ulus*, through their *ulus* curator, requested to ratify charters for the Derbet *khuruls*. Once again, the charter was developed by the joint forces of the *ulus* curator Kozin, Agvan Dorzhiev, chief *bagshi* Ubushi Muzaev, *gelong* Bova Karmykov and Karu *bagshi* Shuguldykov. This charter for the Derbet *khuruls* was largely based on the

⁴⁵³ Ibid.: 8b.

⁴⁵⁴ NARK: I-9: 5: 2670: 29a- 31a.

⁴⁵⁵ NARK: I-9: 5: 1818: 90a: Духовная Академия, являясь высшим учебным и духовным заведением, дало бы просыпающимся молодому поколению сильный толчок к развитию и рассеялась бы сгущенная веками над духовенством атмосфера косности. Первые же питомцы ЧОРИ уже проявляют самостоятельность, выдвигая вперед нормальный режим над старым духовенством и влив в его среду лучезарный свет, воспринятый от ЧОРИ, что производить приятное впечатление на прихожан-калмыков.

charters for the *Tsanit Choira*.⁴⁵⁶ Kozin was a strong proponent of the charter, in which he saw the Buddhist clergy's genuine desire for reform.⁴⁵⁷

The charter for the Derbet *khuruls* illustrates the desire of Kalmyk Buddhist renovationists to purify Buddhism through a revival of monastic discipline and an intensification of Buddhist education. The provisions were aimed at reinforcing the existing rules for the Buddhist *sangha*. At the same time, by introducing the charter, reform-minded Buddhist monks hoped to increase the *sangha*'s moral purity and good conduct. In fact, many of the rules stipulated in the provisions represented the usual precepts Buddhist monks were bound by – many of which, however, were frequently violated. As such, the charter stipulated that the *sangha* must remain in the *khuruls* at all times, and only leave them with the permission of the *bagshi* who was to give out special leave papers. The sanction for consuming alcohol was immediate expulsion from the *Tsanit Choira* or the *khurul*. The *chief bagshi* had the power to employ any measures he saw fit to stop students from playing cards, chess and smoking tobacco in *khuruls*. The *sangha* was also prohibited from wearing Russian-style black high boots, or any other expensive footwear. The charter also stipulated that the chief *bagshi* and his substitute had to discourage people from consuming alcohol and playing cards, by arguing that they are also against “imperial laws” and “the laws of the faith”. Those Buddhist monks who violated the rules would be disrobed and revert to being commoners.⁴⁵⁸

The example of the *Tsanit Choira* thus also provided a model for reform of Buddhist monastic education in *khuruls*. Through the charter of the Derbet *khuruls* the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha* aimed to reform and systematize the program for monastic education in the Derbet *khuruls*. The concept was set out as follows: in order to accomplish the level of a *manzhi*, one had to successfully complete at least four years; those who completed five years of education could get rank and title of a *gelong* or *getsul*; and those who finished eleven years could perform any ritual or prayer similarly to a *bagshi*, Lama or *Khambo*. There were

⁴⁵⁶ NARK: I-9: 5: 1892: 1a-2b.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 6a-7b.

examinations to each graduation. The acceptance age for *khurul* schools was to be fifteen or younger.⁴⁵⁹

As was the case with the establishment of the *Tsanit Choira*, these new ideas were met with opposition by the Lama and a group of conservative monks. In fact, Lama Chimid Baldanov argued that the charter was only suitable for the *Tsanit Choira*, and that all *khuruls* must preserve the same order and rules as they had before. Lama Chimid Baldanov also stressed that the Kalmyk *sangha* already needed the *bagshi's* permission to leave the *khurul*, were forbidden from drinking alcohol, playing cards, smoking tobacco, or owning expensive attire. Additionally, Lama Baldanov argued that the *khuruls* did not need a systematized program.⁴⁶⁰ The Russian government also refused to support the endeavor.

Prolonged isolation and Russian involvement in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs led to a gradual decline in Buddhist knowledge and the corruption of the Kalmyk *sangha's* mores. The government's promise of religious freedoms and its renewed geopolitical interest in Asia allowed the Kalmyks to reestablish their contacts with other Buddhist regions, which, in turn, facilitated the emergence of a Kalmyk Buddhist renovationist movement. This group of reform-minded Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and laity led by Agvan Dorzhiev attempted to modernize Buddhist monastic education. Two Buddhist religious academies – *Tsanit Choira* were founded to standardize and systematize Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education and educate a “purer” body of Buddhist monks. The Kalmyk Buddhist renovationists also attempted to extend their reform initiatives to the *sangha* of the Baga-Derbet *ulus*.

The aforementioned Kalmyk Buddhist renovationist initiatives faced opposition from the Lama, who became the leader of the conservative forces that opposed most of these initiatives. However, despite the Lama's opposition, the government supported the establishment of *Tsanit Choira* academies, as it viewed them as a way to further decrease the number of Buddhist monks or at least influence their education. The Buddhist academies were incorporated into the administrative and legal systems. As such, the academies were

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.: 6a-7b.

⁴⁶⁰ NARK: I-9: 5: 1892: 12a -12b.

placed under the jurisdiction of the imperial governing bodies, and the Lama of the Kalmyk people became their official head and supervisor. Although the rules and procedures for the *Tsanit Choiras* were clearly stipulated and determined in the form of a charter, similar to other regulations on Kalmyk Buddhism, many of the clauses were, in fact, never adhered to.

The government's intensified interests in Inner Asia not only facilitated the development of the Kalmyk renovationist movement, but also created new assignments and opportunities for the Buddhist *sangha* and the rest of the Kalmyk population. These assignments and opportunities were closely linked to Kalmyk relations with Tibet and will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

6.5. Agents in Robes at the Service of the Empire

In the nineteenth century, the Russian and the British empires entered a race for domination in Asia, also known as "the Great Game" (Andreev 2006; Ewans 2004; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2002; Siegel 2002). Its main arenas being Afghanistan, Persia, and Xinjiang (East Turkistan). As Russia conquered vast swathes of Central Asia and Transcaucasia, British diplomats began to fear for the safety of their empire's "crown jewel" India. Russian political players on their part viewed British expansion into South Asia as a threat to their Central Asian territories (Andreev 2006, 55; Shaumian 2001, 15). Occupying a strategically important geographic location and rumored to possess vast natural resources, in the last decade of the nineteenth century Tibet also became the object of Russo-British rivalry, as the gradual decline of the Qing's power could no longer ensure the protection of its suzerainty (Andreev 2006, 58; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2002, 11).

From the 1870's onwards Tibet became an object of geographical research of British and Russian scientists, led by the Great Trigonometrical Survey in British India and the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in St. Petersburg. By the 1880s and 1890s both empires began to search for ways to establish diplomatic relations with Lhasa, bringing a political dimension into the scientific competition (Andreev 2006, 59, 414-415). Meanwhile, fearing a British invasion, as by the end of the nineteenth century they had already spread their

influence to Bhutan, Sikim, Nepal and other small principalities in the Himalayan region; the Dalai Lama XIII, persuaded by his close advisor of Buriat origin Agvan Dorzhiev, chose to look for rapprochement with Russia (Dorzhiev 2003, 48; Van der Oye 2002, 20-21).

Agvan Dorzhiev and a pro-Russian faction in Tibet believed that the long-lasting rivalry between Britain and Russia would make the latter more likely to support Tibet in its endeavors, while the geographical distance between Tibet and Russia would ensure relative safety for Tibet's independence (Andreev 2006, 78; Dorzhiev 2003, 51). In addition to this rationalist explanation, the Tibetan authorities' choice to look for rapprochement with Russia could be in part due to Buddhist prophecies that predicted the spread of the *Dharma* to the north (Chopel 2014, 305). In 1898 Agvan Dorzhiev visited Russia to probe the possibility of an alliance. Dorzhiev successfully established close contacts with the political and intellectual elites in St. Petersburg, which in turn, earned him the influence needed to be received by Emperor Nicholas II (Andreev 1992, 9). In 1901 Agvan Dorzhiev returned to St. Petersburg as the head of an official Tibetan delegation with a letter from the Dalai Lama XIII to Emperor Nicholas II (Belov, Sviatetskaia and Shaumian 2005, 35-36). Not long after, Tibet and Russia established official diplomatic relations (Andreev 2006, 95).

As mentioned in the previous section, Russia's Buddhist in general and Kalmyks in particular, undoubtedly benefited from Russia's geopolitical interest in Asia. Tibet was the birthplace of Tibetan Buddhism which was followed by Kalmyks and Buriats alike, and until the middle of the eighteenth century the Kalmyks maintained close connections with Tibet, regularly sending emissaries to the Dalai Lama and going on pilgrimages. However, under pressure from the Russian government, which at the time viewed the Kalmyk connection to Tibet as potentially challenging the supremacy of Russian rule, Kalmyk ties with Tibet gradually faded (Bormanshinov 1998, 2). Yet, after Tibet became the focus of Britain's attention at the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian government discovered that it could utilize Russia's Buddhist ties with Tibet to serve the empire's geopolitical interests. Hence, as argued by Andreev (2001, 353), the Russian government "began to express

concerns explicitly about the need for its Buddhist subjects to communicate freely with their spiritual leader in Lhasa”.

In the light of these new political circumstances, Russia’s Buddhist subjects gained a new importance. A letter addressed to Tsar Nicholas II by an unknown author illustrates Russia’s Buddhists’ role in Russia’s foreign policy: “[...] our hearts are filled with the most fervent patriotic feelings, with the deepest love for the Russian Power which accepted us and fell in love with us. And now our fellow clansmen spread the good word [about the mercy and patronage of the Russian emperor] in all of Mongolia, Northern China and Tibet.”⁴⁶¹ Indeed, St. Petersburg enlisted the Kalmyks’ and Buriats’ assistance for its geopolitical interests in Tibet, and the Kalmyks and Buriats provided their services to the empire as undercover agents, interpreters and intermediaries. Posing as Khalka-Mongols, Buriats and Kalmyks were able to visit Tibet without attracting too much suspicion from the Qing government. Although one cannot completely disregard the spiritual goals of these trips, after all, Tibet was the center of Buddhism, their travels were often commissioned and sponsored by state agencies, and the collected information contributed greatly to Russia’s knowledge about Tibet.

The first Kalmyk monk who left an account of his travels to Tibet was the founder of the first *Tsanit Choira* in the Kalmyk steppe – Baaza-*bagshi* Menkedzhuev. According to Aleksei Pozdneev (1897, V-VI) Baaza-*bagshi* was famous for his extensive knowledge of the Buddhist canons as well as his high moral standards. Baaza-*bagshi* and his companions, *manzhi* Lidzhi Iderunov and a Kalmyk commoner by the name of Dordzhi Ulanov, were granted an audience with the Dalai Lama (Pozdneev 1897, 4, 83). Baaza-*bagshi*’s travels in Tibet lasted from 1891-1894, and his description of Tibet presents an immensely important account. In addition to attempting to reform Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education, Baaza-*bagshi* was also closely engaged with the intellectual elites in St. Petersburg. He was a member of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (Russian: *Imperatorskoe Russkoe*

⁴⁶¹ AV IVR RAN: P-2: 1: 37: 1a: [...] преисполняют сердца наши самым пламенным патриотическим одушевлением, самой глубокой любовью к принявшей и полюбившей нас Русской Державе. И Теперь уже наши единоплеменники разносят о ней добрую весть по всей Монголии, Северному Китаю и Тибету.

Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo) (Bembeyev 2004, 17). Baaza-*bagshi* also “selflessly volunteered” to become a guide to Tibet for the Kozlov expedition. In fact, count Esper Ukhtomski personally lobbied the Minister of State Properties, Aleksei Sergeevich Ermolov, to send Menkedzhuev together with several other Kalmyks along on Kozlov’s expedition.⁴⁶²

Another Kalmyk *bagshi*, Purdazh-Ochir Dzhungruev, visited Tibet twice: once in 1898-1900 and once more in 1902-1903. Unfortunately, only the account of his second journey has remained intact. In his travel notes, Dzhungruev states that the purpose of his first visit to Tibet was to notify the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama about the construction of a *khurul* named after the Dalai Lama, which came to be known as “Bogdo” also known as “Shabinar” *khurul* among the Bordo-Shabinar and Mamut-Shabinar clans (Rudneev and Sazykin 1987, 127). Although this piece of information only represents a partial explanation, the fact that the *khurul* had been constructed more than 200 years before, in 1681 to be precise, makes us wonder whether Dzhungruev may have had an ulterior motive. What is clear is that Dzhungruev’s second journey to Tibet had quite a different motive. Acting as a messenger, he was delivering a letter to the Dalai Lama from Agvan Dorzhiev about Russia’s position on the Tibetan question (Rudneev and Sazykin 1988, 136). Dzhungruev met the Dalai Lama, and the latter questioned him extensively on Russia and Agvan Dorzhiev (Rudneev and Sazykin 1988, 136).

Another Kalmyk who delivered correspondence between Agvan Dorzhiev and the Dalai Lama was Ovshe Norzunov. As mentioned in chapter 6.2. Norzunov had a noble origin: he came from a family of *zaysangs* of the Baga-Derbet ulus. What yet to be said is that Ovshe Norzunov also was a member of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society (Mitruiev and Voronina 2018, 37), which meant that he did not only possessed a certain degree of influence among the Kalmyks, but also among St.Petersburg’s intellectual circles. Norzunov travelled to Tibet with Dzhungruev in 1898-1899, however, the former also visited Tibet two more times in 1900 and 1901 (Andreev 2013, 45-46). According to the notes of Agvan Dorzhiev

⁴⁶² RGIA: 1291: 85: 289: 2b-5a.

(2003, 50), after the first meeting with the Tsar Nicholas II in 1898, Dorzhiev dispatched Ovshe Norzunov to deliver a letter and gifts to the Dalai Lama XIII. As noted by Andreev (2006, 97), during his second travel to Tibet, Norzunov was not merely transporting gifts, but also arms that had been confiscated by British authorities and never reached Tibet. However, Norzunov himself denied this and in his diary mentioned that he only had one rifle and bullets for self-defense (Mitruev and Voronina 2018, 56). Following a request from the Imperial Russian Geographical Society Norzunov also took photographs of Tibet that were subsequently published by National Geographic (Tsybikov 1991, 123). Andreev (2013), highlights the significance of these photographs as some of the earliest visual records of Tibet, offering unique insights into the country's landscapes, architecture, and daily life before significant external influences. According to the report of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society, the latter awarded Norzunov with a silver medal from the Department of Ethnography "for reporting interesting information and photographic images concerning Lhasa and its vicinity" (report RGS 1901, 39). Norzunov's photographs and descriptions of Tibet became known to a broader public when a French anthropologist M.J. Deniker published Norzunov's diary about his travel to Tibet in 1904 and the photographs of Norzunov later in National Geographic.

When in 1903 a British military expedition under the command of Colonel Francis Younghusband entered Tibetan territory (Mckay 2012, 5-6), the Russian War Ministry sent a small expedition to report on the situation. Although the War Ministry considered sending a military expedition, in order to avoid direct confrontation with Britain, the Ministry opted for a group consisting of Kalmyk scouts (Andreev 2006, 121-124). What was first and foremost an intelligence mission to Tibet was to be covered up as a pilgrimage of Russian Buddhists. After having an audience with Emperor Nicholas II, the mission was dispatched to Tibet in early 1904 (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 50-51).

Headed by a Kalmyk army officer *pod'esaul*⁴⁶³ Naran Ulanov (1868-1904) and the second in charge *bagshi* Dambo Ul'ianov (1844-1913) the mission was given the task to assess

⁴⁶³ An officer rank among the Don Cossaks.

the situation in Tibet (Andreev 2006, 121-124; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2002, 25). Bormanshinov (1992, 161-162) also claims that the members of the mission were asked to incite the Tibetans against British rule. The core members of the expedition Naran Ulanov, *bagshi* Dambo Ul'ianov and Lidzhi Sharapov were joined by *gelongs* Dzhaltsan Kudyrev, Purva Shotanov, a Badma Ushanov, and a layman Ulumdzhi Asanov (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 50). It is important to note that, in 1877, *bagshi* Dambo Ul'ianov, *bagshi* Prin Tsedenov and *gelong* Sharab Lubsan had already attempted to travel to Tibet, however, had been stopped in Kiakhta⁴⁶⁴ by the Russian frontier commissioner, who refused to issue them passports (Bormanshinov 1998,8). However, since this new journey was commissioned by the War Ministry, this time, crossing the Russian frontier was not a problem.

The leader of the mission Naran Ulanov died on the journey, and most members of the group refused to continue without him and returned home (Ul'ainov [1913]2014, 59). *Bagshi* Dambo Ul'ianov and Lidzhi Sharapov, however, continued their journey to Tibet. As *bagshi* Dambo Ul'ianov ([1913]2014, 61) writes in his travel notes: "I personally, facing hazards and regardless of any costs, wanted to reach Lhasa. This eagerness, first of all, came from the wishes of the Sovereign Emperor – the White Tsar – 'pray and pray well to the shrines', which I received as a godly covenant, which I should sacrifice my life to; and, secondly, my friend Ulanov before his death begged me to reach Lhasa". According to Andreev (2001, 354-355), *bagshi* Ul'ianov distributed a "booklet" among Tibetan monks, which contained basic information about Russia and stated that Russia is the northern Shambala. Upon their return to Russia in early 1906, *bagshi* Dambo Ul'ianov and Lidzhi Sharapov reported back to the War Ministry (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 76). They also handed over collections of the Kangyur and Tengyur⁴⁶⁵ that they were requested to purchase for the museum of Tsar Alexander III (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 59). *Bagshi* Ul'ianov was greatly rewarded for his persistence and services to the state, the government allowed him to reopen his clan's *Erketen khurul* that had been closed down in 1896 (Ul'ianov [1913]2014, 76).

⁴⁶⁴ A border town at the Russian-Mongolian border.

⁴⁶⁵ The Buddhist canon with commentaries to Buddha's words.

Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that the Buddhist clergy represented not the only Buriats and Kalmyks whose services were widely used in the exploration of Asia. Famous Buriat scholar Gombozhav Tsybikov (1873-1930) travelled to Tibet in 1899-1902. Financed by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, Tsybikov made one of the first photographs of Tibet and left an invaluable account “A Buddhist Pilgrim at the Holy Places of Tibet” (Pubaev 2011, 6-9; Pidhainy 2013, 2). Mongolist and Tibetologist Baradijin Badyar (1878-1937), a Buriat student of the renowned Buddhologists Sergei Fedorovich fon Oldenburg and Fedor Ippolitovich Shcherbatskoi, in 1905 was sent to Khalka Mongolia, and in 1906-1907 to Tibet (Savitskii 1990, 141-142). A Kalmyk, N. Ananiev, served as an interpreter to the Grigorii Grum-Grzhimailo 1889-1890 expedition to Inner Asia that was also organized by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (Yusupova 2018, 326-329).

The examples of forays into Inner Asia cited above elucidate the important role the Kalmyk and Buriat Buddhist clergy and laity played in Russia’s geopolitical endeavors in Inner Asia, particularly Tibet, at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his study of Buriat intellectuals, Robert Rupen argued that willingly or otherwise, Buriat intellectuals always played the role of Russia’s agents. The fact that they lived and were educated in Russia, made them adopt many Russian traits, hence, willingly or not, by conducting any activity in Mongolia or Tibet, Buriat intellectuals tended to extend Russian influence there (Rupen 1956, 392-394). While Rupen’s observation could be extended to the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity and their activities in Asia, I believe, the situation was more nuanced.

While the Kalmyks as well as Buriats did play a role as Russian agents in Inner Asia, their belonging to the wider Buddhist community and historical ties of devotion to the Dalai Lama also made them Tibetan agents in Russia. As such, the Kalmyks and Buriats provided imperial officials and intellectuals with information about Tibet and Buddhism, and were serving as guides, messengers, translators and even teachers. Thus, it would be best to conclude that enjoying both the trust of the Russian and Tibetan sides, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity had a dual position.

As discussed in the previous section, the resumption of contacts with Tibet and Mongolia contributed to the rise of a Buddhist renovationist movement among reform-minded Kalmyks. At the same time, as they provided their assistance to the empire's geopolitical objectives and scientific interests, the Kalmyks empowered themselves as agents of the state. Contrary to the government's policies of the past two centuries: to establish some sort of autocephaly in Kalmyk and Buriat Buddhism and curb their ties with Tibet, now the government needed to reactivate these ties to gather intelligence. As this was outside of the usual scope of the *sangha's* obligations and responsibilities, the government found it important to maintain good relations with the Buddhists. Summarized in the words of Esper Ukhtomskii (1891, 24): "in case of war with 'Tianxia' (Podnebesnoy⁴⁶⁶), it will be necessary for the Mongols from different tribes to be our allies or stay neutral. Our *inorodtsy*-lamaists could help in facilitating this. For this reason, it is necessary that we understand their needs and do not oppress them in religious matters." Thus, how the Buddhist subjects were treated would eventually influence the Tibetans' considerations with regard to the question of rapprochement with Russia. Considering the internal socio-political crisis that was dawning on Russia at the turn of the century, and the talk of expanded religious freedoms, Russia's Buddhist subjects utilized their influence in St. Petersburg to participate in the discussion and attempted to pursue their interests actively.

It is important to note that those Kalmyk clergymen who presented their services to the Russian state were among the most educated Kalmyk monks, who were at the forefront of the Kalmyk Buddhist reform movement. They were close to the imperial administration and academic circles in St. Petersburg. The Kalmyk and Buriat ties with St. Petersburg intellectual elites, particularly members of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society and the scholars from St. Petersburg University's Oriental Faculty earned them support for their interests. Famous Buddhologists Sergei Oldenburg, Fedor Shcherbatskoi and their students held positive views on Buddhism arguing that it could facilitate the spread of 'European Enlightenment' among Buddhists (Tolz 2011, 128). Indeed, when the 1905 decree promised

⁴⁶⁶ The term "podnebesnaia" is a literal translation from Chinese language meaning "under the sky", and used when referring to China.

to review the existing legislation on Buddhism, a group of Orientalists led by Oldenburg and Shcherbatskoi sent a letter to Prime-Minister Sergei Witte, asking to improve the status of the empire's Buddhists. They presented their ideas regarding the reform of legislation on Buddhism, and insisted that the government should fear separatism and grant Buddhists the freedom of conscience and stated that "[...] in its essence Lamaism is full of highly moral and philosophical truths".⁴⁶⁷ In this sense, the Orientalists' views opposed the views accepted by most of the government officials and missionaries, who regarded Buddhism as the main hindrance to the *inorodtsy's* assimilation.

As noted by Vera Tolz in her study on imperial and Soviet Russia's Orientalist tradition, the Orientalists greatly benefited from the presence of Buriats and Kalmyks in the Russian territories: this allowed the scholars to study "living oral tradition" of Buddhism and use the Buriats and Kalmyks both lay and clergy to help them with translations, interpretation and fieldwork (2011, 114-117). However, at the same time, the research on Buddhism and the peoples that followed it had a clear practical purpose: it was necessary to fulfil administrative tasks and to complete their cultural integration – in other words, the conversion of Buddhists (Ostrovskaja and Rudoi 1994, 373-274). That being said, these scholars played a great role in the formation of a Buriat and Kalmyk nationalist intelligentsia: Gombozhab Tsybikov, Banzar Baradiin and Tsyben Zhamtsarano, were all trained by and worked for Orientalists (Tolz 2011, 18, 117-118).

The combination of Russia's ambitions in Asia and an increased political assertiveness of the empire's Buddhists, culminated in the permission to construct a Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg (Andreev 1992, 12-13). On December 27th, 1907 the Kalmyk diaspora in St. Petersburg forwarded a petition to the director of the Department of Foreign Confessions asking the permission to construct a Buddhist temple "to satisfy their spiritual needs".⁴⁶⁸ In 1908, upon his return to St. Petersburg from his latest trip to Asia, Agvan Dorzhiev also submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a number of requests from the Dalai Lama, in one

⁴⁶⁷ RGIA: 821: 133: 414: 6a-8a: по своей сути ламаизм полон очень высоких моральных и философских истин.

⁴⁶⁸ RGIA: 821: 133: 393: 179a-180a: удовлетворять духовные потребности.

of which Dalai Lama XIII personally asked to allow for the construction of a Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg. In their goal to further win the Dalai Lama's trust, the Russian government permitted the construction of a Buddhist temple (Andreev 1992, 10-13; 2004, 35-36). Nicholas II personally assured Agvan Dorzhiev that "Buddhists in Russia should perceive themselves as if under the wing of a great eagle".⁴⁶⁹ Despite the opposition of some members of the Orthodox Church, that saw the construction of a Buddhist temple in the imperial capital as a direct assault on the dominance and rights of Orthodoxy, as well as financial constraints, the construction was finalized and the new Buddhist temple was consecrated in 1915 (Andreev 1992, 17-20; 2004, 65-66).

It is also interesting to note that in the 1920s the Soviet government continued to use the tsarist government's approach and Russia's Buddhists continued to be agents of the state's interests in Inner Asia. Two influential Bolshevik functionaries of Kalmyk origin Arash Chapchaev and Anton Amur-Sanan urged the Soviet government to utilize its Buddhist subjects to export socialist revolution to the east (Sinitsyn 2013, 321-325; Maksimov 2004, 201-202). The government commissioned Gombozhab Tsybikov to compose propaganda literature in Tibetan (Andreev 2006, 223). And in 1921 the Soviet government sent an expedition to Tibet consisting of Kalmyks and Buriats, posing as pilgrims. Led by a Kalmyk communist, a colonel Vasili Khomutnikov, one of the expedition's goals was to establish friendly relations with the Dalai Lama XIII, as Tibet was regarded as a strategically important base for spreading socialist revolution in Asia (Andreev 2006, 236-238; Maksimov 2004, 202). It was not until the end of the 1920s that the Soviet government abandoned the idea to spread socialist revolution to the east and began a fully-fledged attack on Buddhism (Dorzhieva 2001, 86-111; Sinitsyn 2013, 50-59). As a result of this attack, by the end of the 1930s, Kalmyk Buddhism in its institutionalized form would cease to exist.

The end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries elucidates the important role Russia's Buddhists played in assisting the empire in pursuing its foreign policy goals. Andreev (2001, 362) dubs Buriat and Kalmyk pilgrims "convenient pawns used by both the

⁴⁶⁹ RGIA: 821: 133: 446: 35a: Ламаиты в России должны считать себя под крылом Величавого орла.

Tsarist and Soviet governments for political purposes”. Although accurate to an extent, Andreev’s statement completely disempowers the Kalmyks and Buriats and denies them any agency. I would argue that the Kalmyk *sangha* did have an agency in Russia’s geopolitical game. The government’s need for the Buddhists’ assistance granted the Kalmyk *sangha* strong bargaining power. Utilizing their newly found position of importance, the Kalmyk *sangha* successfully re-established ties with other Buddhist centers, gained trust necessary to obtain important favors, and won over influential advocates of their interests in St. Petersburg, and brought back Buddhist works and knowledge to the benefit of their religious communities.

6.6. Conclusion

The revolutionary mood in the Russian Empire in the early twentieth century forced the government to reconsider the sustainability of the religion-centered framework they employed in the management of the empire’s foreign confessions. The introduction of civil rights and religious freedoms triggered a stream of requests flowing to St. Petersburg. The nature of Kalmyk petitions questioned the viability of the traditional religious order. The Kalmyks criticized the outdated regulations imposed by the 1847 Provision, bypassed the established chain of administrative and legal command, and demanded the reform of the existing legislation on Buddhism. Furthermore, if previously interactions with regard to Buddhist religious matters were mostly happening between the highest levels of Buddhist monks (Lamas), now a wider number of Kalmyk Buddhist monks as well as the laity actively participated in the reform of the Buddhist institutional order and began to widely and directly raise their concerns and expectations to St. Petersburg.

Although the government officially granted its subjects freedom of conscience, the actual degree of freedom remained quite limited. The regional administration was left to interpret the 1904 and 1905 manifestos, and although certain specific issues, such as the opening of new *khuruls* or the opening of *Tsanit Choiras* were positively received, overall, the government and administration remained committed to the laws and rules that were

introduced by the 1847 Provision and other regulations on Buddhism including the monastic minimum age for novices and Russian language requirements for the *sangha*.

On the surface, the Kalmyk *sangha* adhered to the “public transcript”. Welcoming the imperial government’s promise of freedom of conscience, the *sangha* and laity used the officially mandated channels and tools to communicate their ideas, demands and wishes to imperial officials. The Kalmyks submitted their ideas regarding legislative reform, requested monastic appointments, and the opening of new monasteries. However, at the same time, the Kalmyk *sangha* also operated “off-stage”. Following, what Scott called “hidden transcripts”, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity disregarded and disobeyed the imperial rules. Some Buddhist monasteries and monks continued to operate illegally, and even the first Buddhist *Tsanit Choira* academy was established without imperial permission.



**Figure 6. Photograph of a class in one of the Buddhist Academies *Tsanit Choira*.
Courtesy of the National Museum of the Kalmyk Republic.**

Centuries of isolation from other Buddhist centers, an inadequate system of monastic education and the Russian government's involvement in Buddhist affairs had led to a decay of Buddhism among the Kalmyks. However, the First Russian Revolution of 1905 in combination with the rise of Russia's geopolitical interests in Asia facilitated the emergence of a Kalmyk Buddhist renovationist movement. As the government began not only to allow but to encourage the Kalmyks and Buriats to establish contacts with Tibet and Mongolia, Kalmyk Buddhism received fresh influxes of religious vigor. Agvan Dorzhiev and a group of reform-minded Kalmyks seized the new opportunities, and attempted to reform Kalmyk Buddhist monastic education by establishing two *Tsanit Choiras* (Buddhist academies).

Reform plans of the renovationist group were met with opposition from conservative forces led by the Lama of the Kalmyk People. However, the Russian government supported the foundation of the Buddhist monastic academies, if not because it was really ready to relax its restrictions over Buddhism, then because these monastic academies were easier to understand and control. Furthermore, the authorities believed that increasing the level of education would make the road to monkhood more burdensome, which would eventually lead to a decrease in the number of Buddhist clergy. The *Tsanit Choira* academies were allowed to exist, but only within a clear legal framework guided by charters. As with many rules and regulations on Buddhism, the charters were largely ignored.

Russia's geopolitical interests in Asia at the turn of the nineteenth century also opened a new window of opportunity to the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. Belonging to a wider Buddhist community but at the same time being Russia's subjects allowed Russia's Buddhists to play a dual role in Russo-Tibetan relations, enjoying both the trust of the Russian and the Tibetan political establishment and serving both sides' interests. Furthermore, as the Russian government needed the Buddhists' assistance, the Kalmyk clergy increasingly acquired influence in St. Petersburg's intellectual and diplomatic circles. The Buddhist clergy thus developed a real sense of agency and were not simply pawns in Russia's geopolitical games, yet also managed to use their new-found relevance to their advantage.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This dissertation has examined how multinational empires managed its diverse subjects, focusing specifically on Russia's approach towards Kalmyk Buddhism and its *sangha* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A primary objective was to explore if and how the Kalmyk *sangha* engaged with Russian attempts to govern their religion, and how, if at all, Kalmyk Buddhist institutions were transformed as a result of these interactions.

Much like other major empires, such as the Habsburgs, the Ottomans, and Qing empires, Russia used religion as a tool for organizing its diverse subjects, seeking to render them increasingly legible and manageable. From the eighteenth century onwards until the end of the Romanovs' rule, the Russian state utilized religion and religious categories were used for classifying Russia's diverse subjects, and religious institutions became instruments of imperial rule. Although Orthodox Christianity was the dominant and official religion, starting with the reign of Catherine the Great, Russia's autocrats granted certain non-Orthodox religions, including Kalmyk Buddhism a tolerated status. The clergy and religious institutions of these officially recognized non-Orthodox faiths were incorporated into the empire's administrative and legal systems, with their rights and obligations delineated and regulated by Russian imperial law.

Preceding our description and analysis of the subject matter proper, we delved into the history of how the Kalmyks as a people and Kalmyk Buddhism as a religion developed over time from before their arrival in the Caspian steppe until the dissolution of their semi-autonomous polity – the Kalmyk Khanate. This historical backdrop revealed two crucial characteristics of Buddhist political theory that shaped the Kalmyk Buddhist *sangha's* relationship with and the reaction to the Tsars' growing authority over them and their followers: the patron-priest relationship and the concept of the *Chakravartin* as the ruler-protector of the Buddhist faith. This dynamic fostered a complex yet mutually beneficial relationship between secular and religious authority. The trade-off involves the secular providing a people among which to propagate religious teachings, and the religious providing

legitimacy for the secular's subjugation of the people. Despite their isolation from other Buddhist communities and the subjugation under Russian rule, the Kalmyks adhered to this traditional model of patron-priest relations, which was reaffirmed by historical legal codes such as the Great Code (1640) and the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth-century Kalmyk Toktols and Jinjil Codes. Furthermore, as I also argue in Chapter 4, this relationship model influenced the Kalmyk sangha's behavior amid the increasing influence of Russian culture and administration, allowing them to leverage their unique position to pursue personal and communal interests—a critical element of agency often overlooked in current literature.

The process of gradual incorporation into the Russian sphere of influence, too, revealed two recurring themes in our analysis: centralization and a strategy of appeasement mixed with interference. The centralization of power simplified governance. Indeed, one or a few powerful figures were far easier to control than the multitude of Kalmyk *uluses* and *khuruls*; each with their own pastures, noblemen, *bagshis*, and *sangha*. The 1825 Regulations for the Governance of the Kalmyk People are a prime example for this as it installed two Kalmyks – one Lama and one nobleman – on the newly established Kalmyk Affairs Commission to represent all Kalmyks. The inclusion of the Kalmyk leaders in the Commission, was on the one hand an attempt of appeasement by providing the Kalmyk nobility with official representation, and on the other hand, provided the imperial authorities with the necessary expertise to gather valuable information to prepare for a more comprehensive governing legislation, the 1834 Provision. The imperial government employed a strategy of appeasement and accommodation mixed with interference and political machinations which is a recurring theme at several points in our research. This strategy involves pitting of different factions fighting a succession battle, pushing for the transformation of Kalmyk political, social and religious institutions, and promoting and accommodating monks and noblemen favorable to Russian interests. Of course, such efforts at concentrating power, appeasement and interference also involved the use of official written agreements, petitions and legislation, which – despite existing tradition – implied that these instruments of authority would increasingly come to carry more weight in Kalmyk society.

The 1825 Regulations did not end the government's efforts to make its Kalmyk subjects and territories legible; rather, it laid the groundwork for subsequent legal frameworks, including the 1834 and 1847 Provisions for the Governance of the Kalmyk People. These laws were part of a broader initiative under tsar Nicholas I to centralize and unify imperial administration and bureaucracy for the purpose of better legibility of the empire's subjects. These legal instruments further formalized the Kalmyk governing structures as part of the larger Russian administration, while increasingly attempting to manage and control the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy and its role in the lives of ordinary Kalmyks.

The 1834 and 1847 Provisions illustrate the government's tendency, beginning in the eighteenth century, to root its authority increasingly in religious structures, integrating religious figures and institutions to consolidate secular control. This approach was consistent with the legislation governing the empire's other "foreign confessions," aiming to incorporate Kalmyk Buddhism into the imperial administrative and legal frameworks. These legislations codified the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of the Kalmyk sangha, enhancing the legibility of Kalmyk Buddhism within the empire's system.

Notable examples of this drive for legibility included the establishment of staff quotas for monks and monasteries, the legal purview of the *sangha's* activity was curbed, and new institutions were set up to oversee the *sangha* and reduce their unsupervised interactions with devotees. The incorporation of Kalmyk Buddhism into the bureaucratic framework of the empire also led to a transformation of the institutional structure of Kalmyk Buddhism. The monastic hierarchy was streamlined and centralized. Examples of this include the creation of the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board in 1834 and the consolidation of authority in the hands of the newly instated Lama of the Kalmyk People in 1847. Put differently, the institutional make-up of Kalmyk Buddhism began to increasingly resemble that of the Russian Orthodox Church. This corresponds with Schorkowitz's observation that from the start of the nineteenth century the Russian Empire moved away from integration through difference towards integration through sameness.

However, the Kalmyk *sangha* were not mere spectators in all these developments and changes. Some actively engaged in developing and implementing reforms. Others, specifically monks with authority, such as the members of the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board and the Lama of the Kalmyk People, also used their position and the lack of a unified government approach to give alternative interpretations to the rules and regulations that came their way, sometimes in ways that undermined the imperial objectives. Additionally, despite the best efforts on the part of the Russian government, actual improvements in legibility or control were limited. On the one hand, the large and sprawling administration inevitably failed to avoid contradicting interests or approaches from hindering the governing process; while, the Kalmyk *sangha* on the other hand, often never properly received or followed the relevant instructions.

Buddhist political concepts such as the patron-priest relationship and the *Chakravartin* informed and facilitated the Kalmyk *sangha's* acceptance of the emperor's position of authority. The Kalmyk Buddhist clergy even incorporated the Russian emperors into the Buddhist realm by describing them as holy and as an embodiment of the White Tara, however, this did not tell the whole story. Members of the *sangha* would also instrumentalize this relationship to serve their own interests. Besides, the integration of the Russian emperor into the Kalmyk Buddhist world view did not eliminate conflicts of interest. After all, the posts, rules and institutions established by the 1834 and 1847 Provisions were subject to control by Russian officials – whether on central or gubernatorial level. This had far-reaching consequences: the loyalty of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy was, at times, split between Buddha and Russian autocrats. Indeed, rituals were conducted for the benefit of the Russian emperor and his family and Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries were named in the dynasty's honor. At the same time, however, the government engaged in ever-more fundamental reforms of Kalmyk Buddhist institutions occasionally putting it at odds with some members of the *sangha*. The Kalmyk *sangha*, after all, still had a duty towards their religious community. A duty which would have been difficult to reconcile with reductions of and limits to the numbers of monks and monasteries. Hence, we do also see instances of everyday resistance, whereby monks circumvent rules in small yet significant ways. The reforms shaping the Kalmyk monastic

economies and the special relationship with the central authorities thus allowed the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy to take advantage of their position while attempting to evade regulation and control. These attempts are a recurring example of agency on the part of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy often overlooked in current literature.

As we enter the second half of the nineteenth century the Great Reforms induced a wave of intellectual interest in modernization, nation-building – and thus, Russification; education being one of the major elements in these discussions. In the case of Kalmyk Buddhism this development manifested itself in an increased Russian involvement in Buddhist monastic education. As Russian authorities attempted to implement policies like a formal minimum age requirement for monastic students and mandated Russian language education for monastics, the Kalmyk sangha asserted its agency by opposing these reforms. Their resistance was effective to the point that the reforms were largely left unfinished, in part due to practical difficulties of implementing them in such a remote region and in part due to the sangha's pushback. This resistance took the form of official petitions referencing previous agreements and legislations, and addressing their pleas to the Russian emperor and his ministers, thus demonstrating both a significant level of integration within the imperial system and a capacity to transform imperial policies to preserve local practices.

In parallel, a marked shift toward Russification was illustrated by the increasing presence of missionaries, supported by the government, who actively proselytized among the Kalmyks. Although these missions met limited success, the fact that the state encouraged them underscores the imperial ambition to integrate Kalmyks not just administratively but also ideologically. This shift from integration through difference to integration through sameness marks an evolving approach within the empire, as authorities sought to impose greater uniformity across diverse cultural and religious communities.

The Kalmyk sangha's opposition, however, was not limited to formal petitions but also manifested through "everyday forms of resistance"—subtle, often concealed acts of defiance that allowed them to protect their religious traditions without direct confrontation. Through selective compliance and nuanced interpretation of Russian language requirements and age

restrictions, the sangha maintained a façade of compliance while subtly subverting imperial control. This tactic aligns with the concept of “off-stage” practices, in which overt acquiescence conceals genuine non-cooperation. By evading or reinterpreting these measures, the Kalmyk clergy navigated their agency within the limitations imposed by colonial governance. Ultimately, these layers of resistance reveal the complex dynamics within imperial governance, as the Kalmyk sangha engaged both in official channels and “hidden transcripts” to assert autonomy. This dual approach reflects the sangha's nuanced response to imperial pressures, preserving local religious practices while coexisting within the broader, increasingly uniform, imperial framework. In their careful balancing of engagement and resistance, the Kalmyk clergy exemplified the challenges of imperial rule and the agency of colonial subjects within an empire.

Furthermore, the introduction of Russian language rules and a formal minimum entry age for monasteries – which constituted direct interference in the young Kalmyks’ upbringing – indicates a continuation and deepening of the earlier shift towards greater uniformity, and away from rule through difference. At the same time, the discussions surrounding the implementation of the Russian language rules and their eventual failure highlighted the ambiguity of imperial rules as well as ambivalent positions held by the imperial government, administrators, yet also by the Kalmyk *sangha* itself.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries civil unrest which reached its peak in the 1905 Revolution and Russia’s geopolitical interests in Asia showed great impact on the relations between the Kalmyk *sangha* and the Russian imperial government. As the government succumbed to popular demands and expanded civil and religious freedoms, the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity began to convey their concerns, demands and wishes more actively. If previously engagement with the imperial government was predominantly the domain of high-level Buddhist clergymen, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an increasing number of Kalmyk Buddhist monks as well as laymen sought to take part in the reform of the Buddhist institutional order and other Buddhist matters. The Kalmyk *sangha* and laity increasingly criticized the existing system of governing Kalmyk Buddhism for being

outdated, and expressed their distrust towards the office of the Lama. These actions challenged and, to a certain extent, destabilized the entire imperial system of managing Kalmyk Buddhism. However, despite a long list of Kalmyk demands and requests, the government remained committed to maintaining the prevailing religious order. In the end, the 1847 Provisions for the Governance of the Kalmyk people, and additional rules, such as the formal minimum age and Russian language requirements remained in effect and would continue to constitute the main pieces of legislation regulating Kalmyk Buddhist affairs until the end of the empire.

Although the Russian government did not reform the existing system of governing Kalmyk Buddhism, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the government sought to maintain a positive relationship with the empire's Buddhists because of its changing geopolitical interests in Tibet. Thanks to their historical and religious connections to Tibet, the Kalmyks and their clergy were of great use in Russia's pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Their new-found usefulness allowed the Kalmyks to increase their influence among the governing and intellectual elites of St. Petersburg. The resumed contacts with Tibet and other co-religionists brought about the dawn of a Kalmyk Buddhist renovationist movement that advocated for a renewal of Kalmyk Buddhist traditions. Utilizing the imperial government's commitment to maintain positive relations with the empire's Buddhists, Agvan Dorzhiev and the reform-minded Kalmyk *sangha* and laity established Buddhist academies and elevated the level of education and respect the *sangha* received. These events revealed a split in the Kalmyk *sangha* and laity between renovationists and conservatives. This divide between Buddhist conservatives and renovationists forces was to become even more pronounced in the 1920s. In their attempts to achieve their goals, the Kalmyk *sangha* combined official channels with "hidden transcripts" of undermining, avoiding, ignoring and knowingly overlooking the various restrictive measures placed on Buddhism. Overall, the Kalmyk *sangha's* regard for imperial laws and regulations remained limited.

This dissertation asked three main questions: (1) How did the empire govern and deal with Kalmyk Buddhism; (2) if, and if so, to what degree and in which ways did the *sangha*

participate and engage in creating or influencing the government's policies; and (3) how were Kalmyk Buddhist institutions shaped in the process of interaction with representatives of the predominantly Russian Orthodox state?

With regards to the first question, our analysis of imperial policies towards Kalmyk Buddhism between 1825 and 1917 demonstrates first and foremost the complexity of Russian administrative approaches. Russian policies towards the Kalmyk *sangha* were changeable and contingent on circumstances. Formulated by imperial bureaucrats at central, regional or local levels, most policies were contested, questioned and reinterpreted at different levels of government and administration, resulting in significant discrepancies between written laws and the reality on the ground. Indeed, however categorically the 1834 and 1847 Provisions, as well as the 1862, 1881 and 1890 regulations, formulated the government's objectives, Russian imperial policies were rarely implemented exactly as formulated. This was due in part to the vast bureaucracy's technological limitations, yet, as we have seen, it was also due to the fact that local and central administrators occasionally had different interests or concerns when dealing with the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy. An oft-overlooked element adding to the complex and imperfect nature of Russian policy and governance was the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's agency which we have tried to bring to the fore in this dissertation.

The element of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's agency brings us to our second question. As we have seen, the Kalmyk *sangha* did indeed engage with the imperial bureaucracy's attempts at regulating Kalmyk Buddhism. Through institutions such as the Lamaist Spiritual Governing Board and the Lama of the Kalmyk People, the *sangha* would bargain and negotiate with the administration in an attempt to influence the way Kalmyk Buddhism was regulated. There are even cases where the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy bypasses the established channels of communication and chain of command by way of petitions, audiences or quid pro quo exchanges, in an attempt to actively shape Russian policy. The substance of the Kalmyk *sangha's* engagement varied from contributions to legal reviews, requests for exceptions to existing rules, to outright objections to a specific regulation and demanding its annulment.

The *sangha's* reactions to Russian attempts at governing were not limited to engagement and participation, but also included resistance and circumvention. Kalmyk monks would regularly attempt to evade or bypass those regulations which did not align with their interests, and, at times, would actively and openly resist or sabotage imperial attempts at intervention in Kalmyk Buddhist affairs. "Everyday forms of resistance", too, featured heavily in the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's reaction to Russian interference. Feigning ignorance, disregarding regulations and misrepresenting information were all part of the *sangha's* repertoire of "off-stage" practices that contradicted and deflected Russian attempts at governing Kalmyk Buddhism. That being said, the *sangha* would also attempt to navigate the system by exploiting their position within it for personal gain. The Kalmyk *sangha* would ingratiate itself with the ruling elite by conducting prayer services and rituals for the health and longevity of the emperors and their families in order to receive gifts and recognition thus expanding their personal influence; or rename *khuruls* to reflect the glory of the Russian Empire so as to sidestep the official quota. Put briefly, the *sangha's* agency is reflected in the variety and complexity of their reactions to imperial policies, ranging from engagement and participation to resistance and manipulation.

In spite of the *sangha's* engagement and resistance, and despite the complexity and imperfection of the Russian imperial bureaucracy, the government's policies did have a lasting impact on Kalmyk Buddhism, transforming its institutions. Overall, the transformation brought about by consecutive Russian reforms can best be described as introducing a degree of centralization. As we have seen, Kalmyk Buddhism was once a disparate collection of *khuruls* each supported by a different clan, each with its own *bagshi* running his religious community autonomously. In its quest for legibility, however, the Russian administration, introduced a series of standard protocols in order to allow it to more effectively govern the territory and its people. Practices such as forcing *khuruls* to inventory and report donations, counting and limiting the number of monks per *khurul*, and subjecting them all to a single Lama of the Kalmyk People were all transformative interventions, some on a more fundamental level than others. In a way, the transformations initiated by the *sangha* themselves were also borne out of Russian intervention and influence. The perceived need

for a revitalization of Buddhist tradition was brought about by the Russian measures which caused the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy's numbers and quality to decline in the first place. In fact, the attempts to reverse this decline, particularly the genesis of the renovationist movement and the establishment of *Tsanit Choira* academies, too, were enabled by encouragement to rekindle the Kalmyks' religious and cultural connections with Tibet and Mongolia.

In terms of its relevance and contribution to the wider literature, this dissertation sheds light on three important issues. Firstly, it illustrates the ability of empires to accommodate diversity, and the methods they employ and difficulties they face in doing so. Where empires' methods are concerned, empires may use or alter existing structures and practices, yet also invent new structures and practices and attempt to embed them in the religions and populations they are trying to control. The difficulties empires face in their attempts at governing a diverse population range from technological limitations (depending on the historical and geographical dimensions), to discord within their own bureaucratic apparatus as well as various forms of covert and overt resistance on the part of the minorities in question.

Secondly, this dissertation has contributed to filling the lacuna in studies on Kalmyk Buddhism where the *sangha's* agency is concerned. As mentioned in the literature review, although there are numerous accounts by missionaries and state officials of *sangha* defying the Russian authorities, very few of them describe these Buddhist monks' efforts at engagement, participation, resistance and manipulation in detail. Indeed, the fact that the *sangha* actively engaged with the Russian state – be it in a positive, negative or neutral manner – is generally overlooked. By engaging critically with secondary sources and closely examining a wide scope of primary materials, this dissertation has illustrated the variety and complexity of the *sangha's* reactions and motivations, thus firmly establishing a sense of agency on their part.

Thirdly, this dissertation has attempted to expand the literature on Buddhism's encounters with colonial empires by attempting to draw parallels between the Russian Empire's approaches and policies towards Kalmyk Buddhism and other colonial empires'

approaches to their respective Buddhist populations. Though the historical, political and geo-spatial differences remain significant, it is important to explore potential similarities so as to clearly establish the limitations of future comparative studies on this topic. Overall, we found that, despite minor similarities in terms of their approach to Buddhist monastic education, generally speaking the Russian approach differs significantly from the French and British imperial policies in, for example, Cambodia and Burma.

As was suggested at the outset, this dissertation aims to contribute to our understanding of, not only how empires of the past functioned and how they managed their diversity, but also to provide some insight into modern integration and assimilation policies in multinational states. As this dissertation was being prepared for submission, the Russian Federations' State Duma was about to start the review of amendments to an existing law, entitled "On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations". If the amendments are to be approved, religious clerics that received their religious education abroad were to pass a competency test and to be re-educated in Russia's religious-educational organizations. These amendments, if passed, would have a profound impact on non-Orthodox religious clerics of the Russian Federation, including the Muslim *ulama* and Buddhist *sangha*, who are frequently educated in religious educational institutions outside of Russia.⁴⁷⁰ Furthermore, just as in the nineteenth century, these amendments would result in even stricter supervision and control of religious organizations by the state. Indeed, as noted by the chair of the Law Review Committee, the amendments are to ensure "transparency" and "more effective policing" of religious organizations' workings.⁴⁷¹ The proposed amendments to the law "On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" illustrate that many parallels can be drawn between the governments of imperial and modern Russia. The government's strategies in dealing with non-Orthodox religious clerics and institutions display significant

⁴⁷⁰ A great majority of the Kalmyk *sangha* today are educated in the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries of India.

⁴⁷¹ "Profil'nyi Komitet Rassmotrel Zakonoproekt O Sovershenstvovanii Pravovogo Regulirovaniia Deiatel'nosti Religioznykh Ob'edinenii". 2020. *Duma.Gov.Ru*. <http://duma.gov.ru/news/49487>, assessed on 17 September, 2020.

similarities. Thus, when it comes to understanding the position of non-Orthodox religious communities in Russia, I believe there are still lessons to be learned from the past.

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Opis' 5: delo 1891. Delo po Khodataistvu Kalmykov Astrakhanskoi Gubernii ob Osvobozhdenii ot Oblozheniia Dolzhnym Sborom Skota, Prinadlezhashchego Buddiiskim Khurulam.

Opis' 5: delo 1892. Delo ob Uchrezhdenii Dolzhnostei Starshego Bakshi, Dvukh Kandidatov k Nim dlia Khurulov Maloderbetovskogo i Manychskogo Ulusov i ob Utverzhdenii Proekta Ustava dlia Etikh Khurulov.

Opis' 5: delo 2084. Predpisaniia UKN Popechiteliam i dr. o Naznachenii Bogosluzheniia na 18 Fevralia (v Chest' Upokoeniia Dushi v Boze Pochivshogo Tsaria Aleksandra II) i na 19 Fevralia v Pamiat' 50-Letiia Otmeny Krepostnogo Prava v Rossii.

Opis' 5: delo 2326. Delo o Vosstanovlenii Iki-Dokzmannikova Khurula "Rashi-Sembo" v Manycheskom Uluse.

Opis' 5: delo 2667. Materialy o Shtate Sluzhitelei Khurulov: Perepiska Lamy Kalmytskogo Naroda s UKN o Vydache Gramot na Zvanie Geliunga i Drugikh Peremeshcheniakh po Sluzhbe v Khurulakh, Spravka UKN ob Ogranicheniia, Kasaiushchikhsia Vozrasta i obrazovatel'nogo tsenza pri Postuplenii v Khurul'nye Uchenniki, Prigovory Ulusnykh Skhodov ob Otmene Etikh Ogranichenii.

Opis' 5: delo 2670. Svedeniia o Buddiiskom Veroispovednom Uchilishche "Tsanit-Chori" v Maloderbetovskom Uluse, Predstavlenom v Upravlenie Kalmytskim Narodom.

Fond. I-15. Maloderbetovskoe Ulusnoe Upravlenie (1804-1906 gg.)

Opis' 2: delo 393. Perepiska o Nevpuske v Predely Imperii Vyslannykh Bezvozvratno za Granitsy Inostrannykh Poddanykh, o Prekrashchenii Mezhdru Narodom Grabezhei, o Novoi Zarazitel'noi Bolezni na Rogatom Skote Chumy, Imeetsia Zaiapanditskii Tekst.

Opis' 4: delo 980. S Tsirkuliarnymi Predpisaniiami, o Tom, Chtoby v Chislo Khurul'nykh Uchenikov Ne Byli Prinimaemyi Molodye liudi, Ne Okonchiv Ucheniia v Nachal'noi Shkole Voobshche ili Ulusnoi Shkoly v Chastnosti, o Poriadke Preprovozhdeniia v Bol'nitsu Bol'nykh Umopomeshatel'stvom. Ob Uporiadocheniiu Deiatel'nosti Podriadchikov po Naimu Rabochikh na Rybolovnye Promysly. O Priniatii Mer k Nedopushcheniiu Proizvodstva Raskopok s Arkheologicheskoi Tsel'iu na Zemliakh Vverenogo Ulusa. Ob Otmene Vospreshcheniia V'ezda v Imperiiu Nekotorym Zagranichnym Poddanym, o Priniatii Mer k Vzyskaniiu s Kalmykov Shestirublevogo Kibitochnogo Sborna i o drugikh.

Fond I-21. Bol'shederbetovskoe Ulusnoe Upravlenie (1816-1918 gg.)

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Fond I-26. Iandyko-Mochazhnoe Ulusnoe Upravlenie (1849-1915 gg.)

Opis' 1: delo 401. Perepiska s UKN o Predstavlenii Svedenii o Khurulakh i Sostoiashchikh pri nikh Dukhovnykh Litsakh.

Fond I-42. Lamaistское Духовное Управление (1836-1898 гг.)

Opis' 1: delo 1. Materialy ob Otkrytii Lamaiskogo Dukhovnogo Pravleniia, Vyborakh, Ego Sostave i Privedenii Chlenov Pravleniia k Prisiage.

Opis' 1: delo 2. Materialy po Zaprosu Soveta Kalmytskogo Pravleniia o Chisle Khurulov i Sostoiashchikh pri Nikh Shtatnykh Dukhovnykh Lits.

Opis' 1: delo 4. Materialy k Voprosu ob Osvobozhdenii Chlenov Lamaiskogo Dukhovnogo Pravleniia ot Ispolneniia Podvodnoi Povinnosti.

Opis' 1: delo 7. Materialy po Zaprosu Astrakhanskogo Voennogo Gubernatora o Prinosheniiakh Khurulam i Raskhodovanii Ikh.

Opis' 1: delo 11. Perepiska po Otnosheniiu Astrakhanskoi Dukhovnoi Konsistorii o Zapreshchenii Geliungam Poseshchat' Kreshchennykh Kalmykov-Kazakov Durnovskoi i Lebiashinskoi stanits.

Opis' 1: delo 14. Perepiska s Astrakhanskim Voennym Gubernatorom i Sovetom Kalmytskogo Upravleniia ob Umenshenii Chislennosti Khurulov i Sostoiashchego pri Nem Dukhovenstva.

Opis' 1: delo 15. Predlozheniia Astrakhanskogo Voennogo Gubernatora o Sokrashchenii Chislennosti Khurulov sostoiavshego pri Nikh Dukhovenstva, a Takzhe o Strogom Nadzore za Nim. Rassledovanie Lamy o Raskhishchenii Dukhovenstvom Imeniia Iandyko-Ikitsokhurovskogo Vladel'tsa Tseren-Ubushi vo Vremia Bolezni i Smerti Ego i Syna Tseren-Arshi.

Opis' 1: delo 16. Donesenie Iki Khurula Khosheutovskogo Ulusa s Imenymi Vedomostiami Ulusnogo Dukhovenstva (Sostoiavshego na Litso, umershego) i Daianchi Nazvannogo Khurula (na Starokalmytskoi Pismennosti).

Opis' 1: delo 17. Donesenie s Vedomostiami Khurulov o Sdelannykh im Prinosheniakh v 1838-1839 gg.

Opis' 1: delo 18. Reestr Zhurnalov.

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Opis' 1: delo 31. Delo po Zaprosu Soveta Kalmytskogo Upravleniia o Chislennom Sostave Dukhovenstva za 1843 g. s Raz'iasneniem Dukhovnykh Zvanii.

Opis' 1: delo 32. Delo po Zaprosu Soveta Kalmytskogo Upravleniia o Shebinerakh.

Opis' 1: delo 35. Otnoshenie Soveta Kalmytskogo Upravleniia ob Obiazannosti Shebinerov Ispolniat' Kazennye Povinnosti i Vospreshchenii Khurulam Bezvozmezdno Pol'zovat'sia Ikh Uslugami.

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Appendix 1. List of the Lamas of the Kalmyk People between 1800-1920

Soibing	(1800-1806)
Genin Chembel	(1825-?)
Dzhambo Gabung Namkiev	(1836-1847)
Gelik	(1852-1858)
Tsurum Denzen	(1858-1861)
Arsha Ongodzhaev	(1861-1864)
Gabung Zungru Bucheev	(1865-1873)
Zodbo Rakba Samtanov	(1873-1886)
Boro Shara Mandzhiev	(1887-1897)
Dzhimbe Baldan Delgerkiev	(1898-1906)
Chimid Baldanov	(1907-1920)

Appendix 2. List of Years of the Reign of Russian Emperors:

Peter I	(1682-1725)
Catherine I	(1725-1727)
Peter II	(1727-1730)
Anna	(1730-1740)
Ivan VI	(1740-1741)
Elizabeth	(1741-1762)
Peter III	(1762-1762)
Catherine II	(1762-1796)
Paul I	(1796-1801)
Alexander I	(1801-1825)
Nicholas I	(1825-1855)
Alexander II	(1855-1881)
Alexander III	(1881-1894)
Nicholas II	(1894-1917)