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- 1 Galina Doržieva is the author of two publications dedicated to religions in Kalmykia: *Buddizm i hristianstvo v Kalmykii* [Buddhism and Christianity in Kalmykia] (Doržieva 1995) and *Buddijskaja cerkov' v Kalmykii v konce XIX – pervoj polovine XX vv.* [The Kalmyk Buddhist Institution from the End of the 19th Century to the Second Half of the 20th Century] (Doržieva 2001). With this third publication, she gives a detailed insight in the history of Buddhism in the lower Volga region where Oirat groups arrived at the beginning of the 17th century and founded the Kalmyk Khanate. In 1771, this khanate entered the Russian Empire « voluntarily » (according to the time-honoured Russian expression, mentioned several times in the book).
- 2 The introductory chapter gives an opportunity to review in detail the numerous and various sources that allow the author to draw up a history of the Kalmyks' religion.

These are the codes of law published in the 19th century and the writings of missionaries (among them the famous sinologist and archimandrite Jakinf – better known by his former name N. Ja. Bičurin), those of Russian civil servants (in particular prince E. E. Uhtomskij, who encouraged Nicholas II to turn Russian diplomatic attention to the Far East and to show a more tolerant political attitude toward the Buddhists of the Empire), and lastly those of travellers and members of scientific explorations (among them the famous P. S. Pallas and I. G. Georgi in the 18th century, and the orientalist A. M. Pozdnev in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th). To these documents left by the Russians and the Germans, one must add from the end of the 19th century publications by Kalmyk intellectuals who willingly identified Buddhism with popular culture and idealized its role in the social and spiritual lives of their compatriots. Doržieva gives also a precious description of different archives, the most important being those kept in the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg), in the Manuscript Department of the Russian State Library (Moscow) and in the State Archives of the Republic of Kalmykia (Elista).

- 3 The present review does not intend to summarize Doržieva's work, which constitutes a useful contribution to the understanding of the rich history of Buddhism in Russia. I shall simply highlight some essential points that the author stresses. The analysis of the regulations (*položeniia*) of 1825, 1834 and 1847, which pointed to the status granted by Saint Petersburg to the Kalmyk Buddhist Institution, shows that the aim of the government was to control and restrict contacts with Lhasa, to reduce the numbers of lamas and monasteries (*Kalm. hurul*), especially by tackling the tradition of entrusting young boys to the monasteries, and finally to centralise the Kalmyk Buddhist Institution by giving it a religious chief, called Lama (with a capital initial), and behind the election of which the Tsarist administration put all its weight.
- 4 It was important for Saint Petersburg to bring the Kalmyk clergy to heel in order to make it an efficient weapon of its policies in an area considered as an important strategic place, owing to its proximity with the Caucasus. Doržieva makes that point by stressing the connivance between Russian authorities and Kalmyk leading classes, and she focuses in particular on the question of the serfs (*šabinar*, *Kalm. šabiner*) attached to the monasteries and who represented no less than a fifth of the Kalmyk population. The institution of *šabinar*, which was totally absent in Buryatia, owing – no doubt – to later diffusion of Buddhism in this area, maintained itself after its official abrogation in 1834.
- 5 Also discussed in the book is the question of the loyalty showed by the Kalmyk lamas to the imperial family, with some monasteries being named after Tsars. Nevertheless, the increasing number of monks and monasteries, especially after the promulgation of the Law of April 1905, testifies to the failure of Tsarist politics – later Soviet politics would be much more effective in putting an end to the religious education of young boys and destroying the class of the lamas, already considered during the Tsarist period as a class of parasites (*tunejadcy*). As for the meaning to be given to this open loyalty of the Buddhist clergy, one would have liked to better understand the reasons for such an intriguing publication as *Predskazaniia Buddy o dome Romanovih i kratkij očerk moih putešestvij v Tibet v 1904-1905 gg.* [*Prophecies of the Buddha on the house of Romanov and a brief essay upon my sojourn in Tibet in 1904 and 1905*] (Ul'janov 1913). Its author, the lama Danbo Ul'janov (1844-1913), who remained famous as an important religious authority even during the period of Stalinist repression, identifies Moscow with Shambhala and

the Romanovs with the kings of this legendary country; unfortunately, the biographical data given by Doržieva do not give any explanation for this puzzling text, often quoted in works devoted to Russo-Tibetan relations or to Russian esotericists.

- 6 This very classic history of Buddhism in Kalmykia provides numerous and precise data, thanks to thorough archival research carried out by the author. It does not neglect the problem of the Kalmyks who joined the Cossack forces and who often remained Buddhist in spite of their compulsory conversion to Christianity. It includes a useful glossary, index and bibliography, as well as several illustrations in black and white.

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