

**SCTCMG 2021****International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»****ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KALMYK STATEHOOD IN THE  
STRUCTURE OF THE SOVIET STATE**

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**Abstract**

The October Revolution of 1917 played an important role in the development of the constitutional status of the Kalmyk people, which initiated the establishment of the Kalmyk statehood as an equal part of multinational Russia. In early 1918, the reunification of scattered Kalmyk khanates began in the Kalmyk steppe. At that time, a very important principle for Kalmykia was proclaimed, being the freedom and equality of the peoples of the new Soviet Russia. Of paramount importance for the development of the statehood of the people of Kalmykia were such documents as “Appeal to the Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!”, “Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia”, “Declaration of the Rights of the Kalmyk Working People”. These acts granted the steppe people the establishment of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk working people in the composition of the RSFSR and enshrined an administrative-territorial structure. The Kalmyks, like other peoples of Russia, took an active part in the construction of the new free Soviet state. This somehow modified a legal status of the autonomous region, its sovereignty, although the decisions of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the local (regional) authorities guaranteed the inviolability of the previously established principles of autonomy. And even complete liquidation. In mid-October 1943, Stalin approved the decision of the State Defense Committee on the liquidation of the Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the eviction of the Kalmyks to the Krasnoyarsk and Altai Territories, Omsk and Novosibirsk Regions.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1920, fundamental changes took place in the development of the constitutional and legal status of Kalmykia. The May extended Plenum of the Kalmyk Executive Committee considered a national state structure of Kalmykia and decided to create an autonomous region. The central bodies of state power of Russia supported the decision of local authorities, since it corresponded to the objective historical and real possibilities and needs for the growth of Kalmykia.

The legal status of Kalmykia was recorded in the “Declaration of the Rights of the Working Kalmyk People” and was ranked as a constitutional act. The All-Kalmyk Congress of Soviets legislatively consolidated the establishment of an autonomous region as part of the RSFSR, as its subject (Scientific Research Institute for Language, 1960).

The adopted “Declaration” summed up that for the first time in 300 years of Kalmyk stay within Russia, they would make their greatest dream come true – the free existence of the Kalmyk people and their cultural and economic revival in close alliance with the fraternal proletariat of Russia. The “Declaration” proclaimed the unification of all disparate parts of the Kalmyk people into one administrative and economic unit – the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk working people within the RSFSR (Bembeev, 2004).

The Soviet government provided for the equality of all peoples that had become part of the RSFSR, but according to the authors, all the principles of collectivization and unification that were incorporated during this period of the establishment of the new Soviet state did not find a clear and proper appreciation. This was due to the fact that collectivization and common economy began to supplant everything private, including national traditions, customs, religion and language that all over time began to disappear and subsequently came to naught. The revival of the Kalmyk language is currently a common problem for all Kalmyks. The restoration of religion and faith is also one of the obvious challenges for the modern Kalmyk people.

Kalmykia still sought to create its own autonomy, needed guarantees of preserving the status and development of the designated territory. This issue was resolved in the summer of 1920. The land surveyors were engaged in defining and establishing the borders of Kalmykia with Astrakhan and Tsaritsyn provinces, Don and Tersk regions – for a total of 2,350 versts. This required a detailed mapping of the steppe, a complete statistical and economic survey and study of land and living conditions of the Kalmyk people.

On November 4, 1920, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and Council of People’s Commissars adopted a resolution “On the Establishment of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people”. The resolution on the establishment of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people with a temporary center in Astrakhan was published in the Izvestia newspaper on November 6, 1920 and read: “The All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars decide: 1. To establish the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people. 2. The establishment of boundaries and the development of a regulation on the autonomous region should be entrusted to a commission composed of representatives of the People’s Commissariat for Nationalities, the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs and the People’s Commissariat for Land with the participation of representatives of the nationality concerned as well as interested provincial executive committees. 3. To oblige the commission to complete

its work as soon as possible. 4. To entrust the convocation of the commission to the People's Commissariat for Nationalities.

M. Kalinin – the Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. V. Ulyanov (Lenin, 1962a) – the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. A. Yenukidze – the Secretary of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee “(Essays on the history of the Kalmyk ASSR, 1970), and on November 25, 1920 – the resolution of the same bodies “On the borders of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people” (Scientific Research Institute for Language, 1960). Under the decree of November 25, 1920, the territory of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people was cut from parts of the territories of a number of adjacent provinces and regions of Russia. The territory and borders of the Autonomous Region of the Kalmyk people were clearly marked and included the following settlements: Aleksandrovsky (Khosheutovsky), Bagatsokhurovsky, Derbetovsky (with the exception of aimaks: Chervlensky and Severny), Erketenevsky, Ikitsokhurovsky, Kharakhusovsky, Malo-, Yandyko-Mochazhny, Manychsky and Kalmyk Bazaar khanates. However, a number of tribes of Yandyko-Mochazhny khanate were subordinated to the Astrakhan Executive Committee in matters related to the fishing industry; Baluyevka, Bulgun, Cresty, Sadovaya, Obilnaya, Kiseleva, Zavetnaya, Torgovaya, Remontnaya, Kormovaya, Priyutnaya, Elista, Kyurulta and Ulanskoe; Bolshe-Derbetovsky khanate, with the exception of the Yashaltinskaya district and the village of Knyaz-Mikhailovsky along the Dzhama Srednyaya river”. There were some reservations, though, about the subordination of individual Russian settlements of the Bolshe-Derbetovsky khanate; part of the territory of the Salsk district, connecting the Bolshe-Derbetovsky khanate with the main territory of the Kalmyk region and located between the provincial borders of Stavropol and Astrakhan provinces and parallel to 46–30 degrees south from the Pulkovo meridian; Kumsky tribe (Decrees of the Soviet Power, 1983).

Later on, the boundaries of the territory of Kalmykia were specified, in particular, by the Decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of August 10, 1925 “On the Borders between the Kalmyk Autonomous Region and Stalingrad province.” On October 10, 1930, All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR adopted a very detailed resolution “On the Approval of the Description of the Borders between the Kalmyk Autonomous Region and the Former Astrakhan District of the Lower Volga Territory (Shapsugov & Ovsepyan, 1998). The normative literature stated that initially the ethnic composition of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region “was not entirely clear”.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The establishment of Kalmyk statehood is one of the most important and urgent issues. This is primarily due to the fact that examining the development of Kalmyk autonomy in the Soviet period, one comes across some issues concerning the territorial structure, changes in territory, and the restoration of the Autonomy within the same borders, but also the disclosure of such concepts as “rights people for self-determination”, “equality of peoples” and “freedom”. All this ended up with the following consequences: collectivization, destroyed religion, local national principles and foundations caused a gradual disappearance of the national identity of the Kalmyk people, and the establishment of a new nation “Soviet people” (Buluktaeva et al., 2020).

It was in Kalmykia that this process was more successful than in other national republics. The Soviet government provided for the creation of a single people, a single language, without religion and without private property. During this period Kalmykia, like all Soviet people, was exposed to the building of communism. During the Soviet period, the Kalmyk people went through tough times, including wars and deportation. Autonomy was lost, and it would take a lot of time and effort to restore it. Until now, the borders and territory of Kalmykia have not been restored to their former status.

### **3. Research Questions**

The subject of research is social interactions connected to the historical perspective to explore the establishment of Kalmyk statehood. Much attention is paid to the Soviet period, when the Kalmyk autonomy began to form. The pros and cons in the development of the constitutional status of the Soviet period are highlighted. Particular attention was paid to documents and other legal acts that were crucial in the development of Kalmyk statehood.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The paper aims to study and discover the scope of Kalmyk statehood during the establishment of Soviet power.

### **5. Research Methods**

The methods of research involved a deductive method for obtaining information and its presentation, a paired inductive method; system structuring was used, the principles of historicism were observed; a descriptive method, as well as tools of a comparative method, were used for an objective assessment and adequate presentation.

### **6. Findings**

The proclamation of Soviet power, namely the February Revolution, was followed by the process of building a new socialist state on the outskirts of Russia. The whole country was engulfed in unrest, the new government promised freedom and equality. During that period, the right of nations to self-determination was declared, which made it possible to change the internal structure of Russia, to change the form of its state unity towards complication. However, in the first weeks of the Soviet state, the Russian Soviet Republic was a unitary state. It was divided into administrative-territorial units, each headed by local authorities. So far, no state formations or, in general, territorial units with a special legal status had been created (Chistyakov, 2003).

From the very beginning, the Bolshevik Party put forward, as the most important requirement of its national program, the right of nations to self-determination, i.e. giving the peoples unlimited freedom to choose their relations with each other, mainly – a subordinate nation with a sovereign nation dominating in a given state. A relatively minor nation could remain within a single state formed by a large

nation, but it could also secede, creating its own independent state. Lenin (1962a) demanded the right to self-determination for all peoples without exception, even for the most backward.

Raising the issue of freedom of secession, the Bolshevik Party foresaw that the majority of peoples economically, politically and culturally bound to the Russian would not want to secede from Russia. The party did not even consider secession to be the best way to decide the fate of certain nations. Lenin (1962b) said: *“If we demand freedom of secession for the Mongols, Persians, Egyptians and all oppressed and unequal nations without exception, it is not at all because we are for secession, but only because we are for free, voluntary rapprochement and merger, not violent. That is the only reason!”*. The Bolshevik Party also envisioned a certain status for peoples who did not wish to secede from Russia. As one of the program requirements, the party put forward the principle of national-territorial autonomy. Peoples that would define their status towards unity, not secession, and within the framework of a single Russian state could establish their own statehood, their own national-state units.

“Complete freedom of secession, the broadest local (and national) autonomy, detailed guarantees of the rights of the national minority – this is the program of the revolutionary proletariat”, Lenin (1962b, p. 456) pointed out.

Kalmykia did not stand aside. It supported the young state and took an active part in its construction. Maksimov (1995) emphasized that the consolidation of Soviet power and the formation of a system of Soviets of the Working Kalmyk people created favorable conditions enabling to transform the Kalmyk steppe into a special administrative-territorial unit with the rights of a county within Astrakhan province. The bodies of state power were made up of tribe, khanate Soviets, the congress of Soviets of deputies of the working Kalmyk people, and the Kalmyk executive committee. This marked only the beginning of the formation of national autonomy, since this district did not yet possess the main features of a subject based on the principles of federalism (Maksimov, 1995).

On January 25, 1918, the congress approved the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People. In this document Russia is declared a republic of soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies. All the power in the center and locally belongs to these soviets. The Russian soviet republic is established on the basis of a free union of free nations, as a federation of soviet national republics.

It was precisely by the Declaration that the soviet Russian republic was established as a federation of Soviet national republics on the basis of a free union of free nations. The state became known as the RSFSR. In the resolution of January 28, 1918, “On the Federal Institutions of the Russian Republic”, the congress established the entire system of the highest and local government bodies of the country (Avakyan, 2010).

All these processes radically changed an evolutionary course of development of the Kalmyk statehood, which ultimately led to the loss of some elements that were integral to the Kalmyk nationality.

## 7. Conclusion

At present, the establishment of Kalmyk statehood is of particular interest. This is primarily due to a great desire to identify the key moments that played a significant role in the construction of the Soviet Kalmyk autonomy, to find historical mistakes that allowed the loss of a significant part of traditions and

rituals of the Kalmyks. Secondly, without a full consideration of historical material, there is no way to adequately build new democratic foundations attuned to national traditions and local customs. Thirdly, the revival of the Kalmyk language also requires a study of the origins, the identification of problems that led to the almost complete disappearance of the language, should push us to the ways and methods of restoring the lost national, traditional and cultural identity of the Kalmyk people.

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