

BUDDHIST COLLECTIONS OF SAINT-PETERSBURG KUNSTKAMERA. III: KALMYK *THANGKAS* IN THE BUDDHIST COLLECTION OF MAE RAS

This work is a continuation of an article published by the author in *Manuscripta Orientalia* [1]. In the previous article, the main attention was given to Buddhist bronze sculpture of the Dolinnor style held at MAE, and Kalmyk *thangkas* were only described briefly. Now we will examine the main features of the style and iconography of Kalmyk Buddhist paintings stored at the Kunstkamera museum.

Kalmyks is the name adopted in the first decades of the 17th century by those Oirats who migrated from Central Asia to the territory between the Volga and the Don Rivers in the southeast European part of Russia [2]. The wide spread of Buddhism among Oirats is connected with the work of the Buddhist monk Zaya Pandit, who came to the Oirats in 1639 [3]. Interacting with other peoples and preserving their religion, the Kalmyks created a unique and vivid culture, which is shown in its full force in architecture [4] and painting.

The Western Asian section of the Kunstkamera museum contains several collections on the material and religious culture of the Kalmyks. The present work will present only ten samples of Buddhist art from the Kalmyk collection Nos. 807, 988, 1157 and 5528.

There are few works about the Buddhist art of Kalmykia. Kalmyk exhibits in Petersburg museums are also

few in number. For example, there are only two Kalmyk *thangkas* held at the Hermitage, and none at all at the huge collection of the Russian Ethnographic Museum. This situation can only be explained by the fact that the proximity of Kalmykia, and the theoretical possibility of easy access to the material, inspired researchers and collectors to concentrate on remote regions of Mongolia and Tibet, leaving Kalmykia "for later". So the examples of Kalmyk Buddhist art held at the Kunstkamera make for a very interesting study, both for Kalmyk art and for Buddhist art in general.

Among the works on the Buddhist art of the Kalmyks, we should note the works by S. G. Batyreva on old Kalmyk art, which are the most complete works on Kalmyk art at present [5]. S. G. Batyreva, examining various forms of Kalmyk art (painting, sculpture, architecture), notes the most obvious characteristic features of Kalmyk *thangkas*, but the Kalmyk style as an original phenomenon in Buddhist art is not clearly defined. This work is an attempt to continue S. G. Batyreva's work, and outline the characteristic features of the Kalmyk style on the example of the small but interesting collection of MAE RAS. The work also aims to put examples of Kalmyk Buddhist art from the Kunstkamera collections into scholarly circulation.

History of Collections Received by the Kunstkamera

A list of Kalmyk collections held at MAE RAS was published by V. N. Kislyakov [6]. Therefore, we will concentrate on information about collections which we believe are sufficiently important and which are absent from V. N. Kislyakov's article.

(i) Collection No. 807 was received by the Museum in 1904 from M. A. Elachich. The location is given as Astrakhan.

(ii) Collection No. 1157 was received by the museum in 1907 from N. N. Kandib. The location is given as Astrakhan as well.

(iii) Collection No. 988 was received in 1906 from Dzhungortsev through A. D. Rudnev.

(iv) Collection No. 5528 has the most interesting story of origin. The description states that this collection

was received in 1937 from D. Naumov from Saratov through Professor Alexeev. The location is given as "Kalmyk Oblast", the people as Kalmyks. Two notes are attached to the description. The contents of these notes are so interesting that we would like to reproduce them in full:

One Saratov artist gave me six Buddhist drawings and said that to understand this style, he was given these "icons" ten years ago by a professor whose name he had forgotten, while the professor soon disappeared and did not return. He was tall, thin, elderly and was connected with the local University. On 9 January 1937, I took these "icons" to be given to the USSR Academy of Sciences through Professor N. M. Tulaikov [7].