

A brief survey of the monuments of the Kalmyk spiritual culture held in Kyiv collections of Ukraine

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During the late 17th and most of the 18th century, students, graduates, and educators of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (KMA, 1659–1817), the first higher educational institution in Eastern Europe, which later became the Kyiv Theological Academy (KTA, since 1819),² established direct connections with diverse religious communities. These interactions included Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Shamanistic, and Buddhist communities in China, Buryatia, and Kalmykia. Engaged in pastoral and missionary services, the priests of the academy worked among various peoples in Siberia, the Volga region, and the Astrakhan diocese, which was established as early as 1609 and included the Kalmyks. Many of these preachers and educators were monks who received their education at Kiev-Mohyla Academy, and they actively participated in charitable initiatives. Thus, those associated with KMA aimed to fulfill their spiritual duties by spreading Orthodoxy, employing preaching, missionary endeavors, and acts of charity (fig. 1).

By the middle of the 17th century, the Kalmyks began to embrace Orthodoxy, and baptized settlements started to emerge. However, Buddhism in its Tibetan version remained their primary religion [Yakunin 2022: 23]. The significance of the priests' interactions with the Kalmyk population cannot be understated, as these contacts

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² In 1632, through the merger of the Fraternal (Bratskaya; 1619) and Lavrskaya monastic schools, Metropolitan Petro Mohyla established the Kyiv-Mohyla Collegium, which gained Academy status within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1659. This status was reaffirmed twice (1694, 1701) after the Andrusovo Truce and the change of the territorial affiliation of the Left-Bank Ukraine (1667) and Kyiv (1686). The Kyiv-Mohyla Academy's status evolved in 1817, becoming the Kyiv Theological Academy, and it continued to exist until 1917. See Hizhnyak, Mankivsky 2003: 54, 170.

predated the migration of a part of the Kalmyks to their historical homeland in 1771, although they continued in various forms thereafter. The main difference between Catholic and Orthodox missionary activities is the Orthodox Church's dependence on state policy. Peter I (1672–1725) (fig. 3) believed that Russia was surrounded by a dense wall of “evil-believers who needed to be enlightened with the light of Christianity, and it was worth sending ‘around ten people’ at least to Kyiv schools if the light of enlightenment was dimming at home in Moscow” (Runkevich 1906: 105). The beginning of missionary efforts was marked by the decrees of Peter the Great, “On the Kalmyks, to persuade their owners and precept-holders to embrace Christianity through education and bounty, and to translate necessary books into their language (June 18, 1700), and “On the search for capable teachers to convert the Kalmyks to piety”.³ Hieromonk Nikolay (Adoratsky, 1849–1896), the historiographer of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing, emphasized the essential qualities of Ukrainian priests for successful work in both the parish and mission, particularly highlighting “the steadfast characters of Malorussians⁴ who hardened through the struggle against Catholicism and possessed relatively greater enlightenment” (Nikolay 1887: 58).

The expression ‘Greater Enlightenment’ signifies that educated clergy who graduated from KMA maintained its traditions. They followed the example of Metropolitan Petro Mohyla (1596–1647),⁵ (fig. 2) its founder, and some of them went on to serve, spending a certain time as educators in their native academy, to which nearly all archpastors of the Orthodox Church of Russia were related until the mid-18th century. Virtually regardless of where their subsequent service took place, whether in Ukraine or beyond its borders, they endeavored to establish all-encompassing schools when possible,

³ See Yakunin 2022: 23; Kahamlyk 2021: 305–306.

⁴ The term was commonly used in the 19th century Russia to designate Ukrainians.

⁵ Saint Peter (formerly known as Peter Simeonovich Mohyla, 1596–1647), Metropolitan of Kyiv, was a descendant of Moldavian and Wallachian rulers. He studied at the Lviv Fraternal (Bratskaya) School, and possibly at various European universities. During the conflict with the Ottoman Empire, he fought on the side of Poland and distinguished himself in battles at Tsetsora and Khotyn. Upon becoming a Metropolitan, he reorganized education along the lines of Jesuit teaching traditions and established a *collegium*, which is now known as the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. He sought to reconcile all confessions, restored the Sofia Cathedral to Orthodoxy, and revived the Vydubychi Monastery, while also reconstructing ancient Russian churches. During the demolition of the Desiatynna Church in Kyiv, the relics of the apostle-like Prince Volodymyr were discovered. Metropolitan Peter was actively involved in publishing, demanding that canonical texts be compared with their Greek originals during the publication process. He bequeathed his library to the Kyiv Collegium. Canonized by all branches of the Orthodox Church, both in Ukraine and Russia. See Nychyk 1997: 3–11, 323.

accessible to orphaned children, *collegia*, taught in fraternal schools, assembled libraries, bequeathed books to the schools they had established, similar to what Metropolitan Petro did in his time. Priests aspired, as required, to translate sacred scripture texts into languages understandable to the newly converted flock, to conduct lessons and preach in their native tongues.⁶ The teacher had to be “pious, wise, humble, meek, patient... [He had] to diligently instruct children in useful knowledge, and exhibit an example of virtuous deeds in all things”. Education at KMA intended to shape future pastors with life orientations directed towards a monastic and spiritual life, corresponding to their level of education. If earthly rulers possess power over property and life, to the priest, authority over a person’s soul is bestowed (Kahamlyk 2021: 231).

In the first third of the 18th century, two graduates of KMA led the Astrakhan Eparchy—Lavrentiy Gorka and Varlaam Linitsky. A connoisseur of classical languages and the author of one of the first Ukrainian dramas, “Joseph the Patriarch”, Lavrentiy Gorka (1671–1737), Bishop of Astrakhan and Stavropol (1723–1727) (fig. 4), in a note submitted to the Holy Synod, highlighted the necessity for priests dispatched to the Steppe to have knowledge of the Kalmyk language. Lavrentiy Gorka⁷ was born in Lviv, into a Cossack family from the village of Stayky (now part of Obukhivskiyi, formerly Kagarlytskyi district of Kyiv Oblast), or possibly in the “Polish” town of Lavrovo (now a village in Staryi Sambir district of Lviv Oblast).⁸ He graduated from KMA, served as a lecturer there, taught the course of rhetoric, became the igumen (abbot) of the Vydubychi Monastery, served as a hieromonk in the Persian Fleet of Peter I.⁹ As a result of his missionary work in Astrakhan, he composed a special instruction directed towards the Kalmyks. This instruction included a “brief explanation of dogmas, simplified administration of sacraments, and other elements to facilitate their conversion to Orthodoxy. Bishop Lavrentiy believed it was necessary to establish shelters for orphaned children and schools for children of all social classes (clerical, townsmen, and household servants) near the churches. However, due to the lack of resources within the Astrakhan Eparchy, he was unable to realize this goal.¹⁰ Information about the personal library of Bishop of Astrakhan and Stavropol has been preserved. It contained 355 volumes of religious and secular content, including works in Latin, Greek,

⁶ See: Hizhnyak, Mankivsky 2003: 8–14; Kondakov 2018: 150–166; Kahamlyk 2021: 189–191, 691–872.

⁷ Born as Andriy, he took the monastic name Lavrentiy.

⁸ See Kahamlyk 2021: 803–806.

⁹ See Runkevich 1906: 28–34.

¹⁰ See Kahamlyk 2021: 387–388.

Hebrew, Polish, and with a minor inclusion of books on natural sciences. In 1738, after the bishop's death (1737, Vyatka), the library was transferred to the Moscow Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy.¹¹

Bishop Varlaam Linitsky/Lenitsky (late 17th century – 1741), the successor to Lavrentiy Gorka in the Astrakhan Eparchy (1727–1730), was a native of Kyiv and also a graduate of the KMA. He arrived in the eparchy during a plague epidemic.¹² Varlaam served as the igumen of the Kyiv Zlatoverkhyi Mykhailivskyyi Monastery (fig. 5), the second most significant monastery in Ukraine. He was proficient in Tatar and Turkish languages, undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (1712–1714), and left travel notes compiled in 1714 in Constantinople, entitled “Peregrination” or “Journey”.¹³ In virtually every eparchy where Varlaam Linitsky served, he established schools. In Astrakhan, he organized a Slavic-Latin school where children of all social classes were taught the alphabet, psalms, the Horologion or Book of hours (a collection of liturgical texts for the daily service), and Latin grammar.¹⁴ At his personal request, he was transferred to the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery, where he passed away in 1741, and his Latin books from his personal library were added to the KTA library.¹⁵

During the time of Bishop Lavrentiy Gorka, when the first missionary camp was established, the images that had been brought by the Oirats in the 17th century were still in use in the Kalmyk Steppe.¹⁶ By the early 1890s, there was already a tradition that attributed the presence of a *zurkhachi* (astrologer)¹⁷ and a *zurachi* (artist) in the Astrakhan Steppe to Ayuka/Ayushi Khan (1642–1724). From then on, artists emerged in every ulus and khurul, and painting schools were established at khuruls, where *zurachis* (artists) were trained or improved their skills.¹⁸ The Great Barunov Khurul and the Dundu Khurul were the most significant among them.

In 1725, Hieromonk Nikodim Lenkevich/Linkevich (1673–1739), armed with the instruction “On Educating Newly Baptized Kalmyks in the Teachings of the Christian Faith”,¹⁹ embarked on a missionary journey to the Steppe. He accompanied the newly baptized Kalmyk prince Pyotr Taishin, grandson of Ayuka Khan (prince Chakdordzhab

¹¹ See Sholom 1967; Kahamlyk 2021: 665.

¹² See Travnikov, Olshevskaya 2010: 753.

¹³ See Kahamlyk 2021: 720–722.

¹⁴ See Travnikov, Olshevskaya 2010: 753–755.

¹⁵ See Travnikov, Olshevskaya 2010: 755 (91 books are mentioned); Kahamlyk 2021: 720–722 (92 books are mentioned).

¹⁶ See Zhitetsky 1893: 44, no. 1.

¹⁷ His name is mentioned as ‘Aryngk-Jaltyn’; in Cyrillic script: ‘Арынк-Джалтын’: evidently, a distorted Oirat rendering of some Tibetan name.

¹⁸ See Zhitetsky 1893: 61, 64.

¹⁹ See Yakunin 2022: 23; Batmaev 2022: 8–18.

(?–1722) – Taisha Bakdasai-Dordzhi before baptism), along with the portable church gifted by Peter I.²⁰ By birth, Lenkevich was of Polish origin, born in the Brańsk Powiat of the Bielsk Land (now Gmina Brańsk of Bielsk County, Podlaskie Voivodeship, Poland). He was named Nikolai at baptism and took the name Nikodim upon monastic tonsure in 1715. It is believed that Nikodim Lenkevich learned the Kalmyk language from baptized Kalmyks, and that he was ordained as a monk and a missionary by Metropolitan Filofey (1650–1727; schema-monk Feodor from 1709) of Tobolsk and Siberia,²¹ although this appears questionable from the point of chronology. In 1715, Metropolitan Filofey was in Siberia, and in 1716, he briefly stayed in Kyiv, while Nikodim Lenkevich was already in the Kalmyk Steppe. The question of when and where their paths might have crossed remains unanswered. Nonetheless, due to his knowledge of the Kalmyk language and possibly the missionary insights he gained from Metropolitan Filofey, Nikodim Lenkevich was appointed the head of the first Orthodox spiritual mission in the Kalmyk Khanate.²² To conduct worship and fulfill missionary objectives, students from the Moscow Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy were assigned to him, including Andrey Chubovsky (?–1780), who later became a priest and an ardent participant in Orthodox missionary work among the Kalmyks.²³

The earliest attempts at translating Christian texts into the Kalmyk language date back to the beginning of the 18th century. Hieromonk Nikodim was one the first contributors to this process; he translated the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments along with commentaries (according to the Orthodox Encyclopedia, cited in Kondakov 2018: 152–155). The determination and dedication of Hieromonk Nikodim contributed to the continuity between the 1st and 2nd Orthodox missions in Kalmykia,²⁴ with him again leading the second mission. Thanks to Nikodim Lenkevich, an ethno-confessional group of baptized Kalmyks formed, along with schools for them. With his support, services were translated and conducted in the Orthodox church in the Kalmyk language.²⁵ The responsibility for the school, as proposed by Lenkevich himself, was entrusted to his student, protopop Andriy Chubovsky (Goryaev 2019: 25). In 1739, Hieromonk Nikodim was transferred to the Saint Michael's Monastery of the Kyiv Diocese, which was certainly not coincidental, and there he passed away in 1740. The Monastery, also known as the Miracle-Michailovsky

²⁰ See Pokrovsky 1913: 190; Dzhundzhuzov, Lyubichankovsky 2017: 173–175.

²¹ See Dzhundzhuzov, Lyubichankovsky 2017: 173–174.

²² See Istoriya 1990: 42–43; Shvets 2001: 42–43; Goryaev 2019.

²³ See Istoriya 1990: 42–43; Dzhundzhuzov, Lyubichankovsky: 176–177.

²⁴ See Dzhundzhuzov, Lyubichankovsky 2017: 186.

²⁵ See Dzhundzhuzov, Lyubichankovsky 2017: 186–190.

or Vydubychi Monastery²⁶ (fig. 6), has a tradition of its temple holidays “firmly linked to the idea of the struggle of Christianity against paganism and the ‘real’ help of the Archangel Michael to Christians” (Ulyanovsky 2011: 47). Hieromonk Nikodim Lenkevich, due to his missionary work, earned his stay and end in such a monastery.

Andriy Chubovsky continued the work of his teacher, caring for the baptized Kalmyks in the Stavropol region for forty years. The Orthodox priest Chubovsky (?–1780) hailed from Kamianets-Podilskyi.²⁷ Proficient in the Kalmyk language, he translated the Gospel and Extracts from Church History into it. He also authored a Kalmyk primer.²⁸ In 1780, he passed away and was buried in Stavropol, the city for which he cared in his later years (fig. 7). As a priest, Chubovsky had the right to collect material evidence of the past faith of converted Kalmyks, including books. His knowledge and collection of Kalmyk materials served as the foundation for sections on the Kalmyks and Kalmyk Buddhism in the works of participants in academic expeditions of 1768–1771, including P. S. Pallas (1741–1811), I. I. Lepekhin (1740–1802), as well as earlier figures such as V. N. Tatishchev (1686–1750) and others.²⁹ While the baptized Kalmyks primarily fell under the care of missionaries and parish servants, scholars during their scientific expeditions gathered materials related to Kalmyk Buddhists.

It is significant that scientific expeditions, exploring the territories of the nomadic Kalmyks, found themselves there in 1768–1770, on the eve of the migration of a great part of the Kalmyks to their historical homeland (1771). This timing enabled them to document the state of Kalmyk Buddhism as it evolved during the 17th–18th centuries.³⁰ By the beginning of the 17th century, when the Kalmyks joined the Muscovite state (1655), they had already officially adopted Buddhism. A testament to this is the “Iki Tsaajin bichig” (“Great Code”) enacted in 1640 at a congress of Mongol and Oirat feudal lords, which designated Buddhism as the official religion. Princely congresses took place near cult constructions. In the law of 1614, the text of a prayer first

²⁶ The Vydubychi Male Orthodox Monastery, constructed between 1070 and 1077, underwent reconstruction in the Ukrainian (Mazepin) Baroque style during the 17th to 18th centuries. It was established in honor of the miracle of the Archangel Michael, the conqueror of dark forces, and his aid to Christians in their struggle against paganism—the overthrow of idols at the sanctuary and their immersion. Like other monasteries commemorating such a miracle, it was built on a steep bank of the Dnieper River, in a remote area near a river crossing. See Ulyanovskij 2011.

²⁷ Currently, a city in the Khmelnytskyi region of Ukraine, serving as the administrative center of the Kamianets-Podilskyi district within this region.

²⁸ See Zudina 2013: 42–43.

²⁹ See Zudina 2013: 39–40; Batmaev 2022: 8–18, 13.

³⁰ See Zudina 2013: 39–40.

appeared: "...uum suvasti šiddham. We bow to Shakyamuni Burhan, who achieved perfection, defeated evil spirits (shimnus), comprehended the two truths. We pray to the Burkhan of the ten directions [of the world] and three times for happiness" (Nasilov 2022: 53). The law of 1617 introduced an entry about the punishment for those who "offend the image of Buddha through actions" (Ibid.: 52).

Therefore, by the time the Kalmyks arrived in the European steppes, they were already practicing Buddhism, which was legislatively protected and included a corresponding pantheon. Their migration to the new Steppe was accompanied by specific rituals and ceremonies carried out in movable monasteries (khuruls). The cult of worshiping Amitāyus, also known as Ayuša or the Buddha of Infinite Life, was prevalent. Researchers relied on various materials, including the history of Kalmyk migration, Mongol writings, translations by Chubovsky of specific sacred texts, and his collection of Buddhist books.³¹ As a result, scholars who worked in the Russian Empire, unlike their Western European colleagues at that time, were able to gain insight into the vibrant spiritual culture of Buddhism. Among the books that belonged to the archpriest Andriy Chubovsky, there is mention of "Dojo Zodba", or "Dorjo Jodbo"—a distorted Tibetan name for the text "Dorje Chödpa" (Tibetan: *Rdo rje gcod pa*, Sanskrit: *Vajracchedikā*), also known as the "Diamond Sūtra".³²

Unfortunately, as of now, no manuscripts, woodblock prints from the 18th century, or artifacts of visual arts originating from Kalmykia and somehow associated with the names of the priests who served in Kalmykia during that time, or the native bearers of Kalmyk Buddhist culture, have been discovered in Ukrainian collections. Nevertheless, there is still some hope, particularly because certain priests like Bishop Varlaam Linitsky or Hieromonk Nikodim Lenkevich found their final resting place in Kyiv monasteries. Therefore, there is a reasonable possibility of uncovering some cultural artifacts that could remind us of the challenging intracultural work undertaken by clergy in the 17th–18th centuries. As for the collection of Protopriest Andriy Chubovsky, it undoubtedly either remained in the hands of the 18th century scholars or has been preserved in the archives of Stavropol and Astrakhan, unless they were taken to central Russian archives in Moscow or Saint Petersburg. Their comprehensive descriptions are not available to date. Thus, the first phase of contacts between Ukrainians and Kalmyks is not represented by monuments of spiritual culture, or these monuments have not yet been identified. However, Ukrainian clergy played a role in the formation of an ethno-confessional group of

³¹ See Zudina 2013: 41–49; Yakunin 2019: 333–341.

³² The "Diamond Sūtra" is a concise rendering of the Prajñāpāramitā, a fundamental teaching of Mahāyāna Buddhism dating back to the early 1st millennium CE.

baptized Kalmyks, contributing to the emergence of settlements in the Steppe. Thus, they contributed to the division of the Kalmyks into baptized and nomadic groups, strengthening positions of those who practiced Buddhism and sought to maintain historical ties with their distant homeland.

In the second half of the 19th century, the situation underwent a change. The outcomes of spontaneous collecting efforts by both clergy and secular professionals found their way into the collections of Ukrainian museums and archives. Materials that represent “traces” of the presence and movement of Kalmyks across parts of the territory that now constitutes modern Ukraine are discussed below. These materials are categorized as those with a documented history of acquisition and those with an uncertain provenance. Kalmyk spiritual cultural artifacts could have been discovered as chance findings during geological, archaeological excavations, or through epidemiological expeditions, topographical surveys, and interactions between Christian priests and Kalmyks. Newly accessible sources include accidental surface finds and expedition discoveries, some of which have become available only at the beginning of the 21st century after conservation treatment.

The materials that provide insight into the Buddhist written and visual traditions of Kalmykia, previously belonging to the Church-Archaeological Museum (CAM) at the KTA,³³ and the archive of Saint Vladimir’s University,³⁴ are now present in collections in Kyiv. Icons

³³ The CAM, affiliated with the KTA, was established in 1872. Originally planned, created, and operated as a public institution, it was opened to the public in 1878. According to the museum’s regulations, its funding and collection development were supported by the Church Archaeological Society, church donations, academic and educational organizations, and private individuals. This set the Kyiv CAM apart from similar museums in St. Petersburg and Moscow. The museum’s collections encompassed pre-Christian and Christian, Islamic and Buddhist beliefs, as well as religious art from around the world. With the closure of the Kyiv Theological Academy in 1920, the museum was also shut down. However, its collections became part of the All-Ukrainian Museum Complex in 1926, a state cultural and historical reserve that existed within the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra until 1934. After the reserve’s dissolution in 1934, its collections were dispersed among various archives and museums. Books and manuscripts were transferred to the Manuscript Department of the Nationwide Library of Ukraine (now the V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine). Four encaustic icons brought by bishop Porphyry (Uspensky) (1804–1885) from Saint Catherine’s Monastery located at Mount Sinai, along with several Buddhist paintings, found their place in the present-day Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts. Some icons were taken by the Germans during World War II, while other materials became part of the collections of other museums in Kyiv. See more details in Anthony (Pakanich) 2012: 271, 286.

³⁴ The Imperial Kyiv University of Saint Vladimir, currently known as Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, was founded in 1833. It was established

of burkhans (thangka) are housed in the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts (fig. 8),³⁵ while textual monuments are held at the Institute of Manuscripts of the V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.³⁶ By the end of the 19th century, the KTA museum was the largest CAM in the Russian Empire.³⁷ The museum was established not only to gather and preserve unique church artifacts but also to allow Academy students to familiarize themselves with the spiritual culture of their future congregation, which became mandatory after introducing the course in biblical archaeology and related disciplines. The museum's holdings included items of church antiquity, history, and sacred art, serving as a foundation for the educational process, practical exercises, and academic research. Kalmyk artifacts began to appear in the CAM at the KTA in the second half of the 19th century, thanks to the professional service or personal dedication of clergy and believers alike. According to the list of museum acquisitions compiled by Nikolai Petrov (1840–1921) in the late 19th century (Petrov 1897: 23–26), the following items were donated to the museum:

primarily on the basis of the transferred Kremenets Lyceum, along with its classrooms, laboratories, and unique library (the University and its library were opened in 1834). In the years 1925–1927, the library's collection was transferred to the Nationwide Library of Ukraine (now the V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine).

³⁵ The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts (1936–2011, originally known as the Museum of Western and Eastern Art) was established in 1919 in accordance with the will of the collector Bohdan Ivanovich Khanenko (1849–1917) and the donation of Varvara Nikolivna, his wife (1852–1922). This unique collection is showcased in two departments where European and Eastern collections are displayed. Visitors can explore Byzantine icons, European painting masterpieces, Chinese paintings, Japanese woodblock prints, Tibetan thangkas, and Iranian ceramics.

³⁶ The Institute of Manuscripts was established in 1992 based on the Manuscript Department of the V. I. Vernadsky National Library as an academic research institute. Its main focus is on the study, publication, and preservation of the library's manuscript collection. It was formed based on the holdings of the Kyiv Theological Academy, the Church Archaeological Museum, brotherhood schools, the Prince Bezborodko Historical and Philological Institute in Nizhyn, Saint Vladimir's Kyiv University, along with materials from Kremenets Lyceum, Vilnius University, and other educational institutions. Some items also originated from monasteries, including the Sofia and Michael Zlatoverkh Monasteries and the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. The Eastern section of the collection includes cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia, a Batak manuscript from the island of Sumatra, manuscripts on palm leaves, Arabic and Persian manuscripts, Tibetan, Chinese, Oirat manuscripts and woodblock prints, Hebrew materials.

³⁷ See Burlykina 2018: 93–94.

- an icon of a burkhan from Astrakhan, donated by Professor Alexey Afanasyevich Dmitrievsky (1856–1929)³⁸ of the KTA;
- thirteen icons acquired from the family of the Chief Trustee of the Kalmyk people,³⁹ Kapiton Ivanovich Kostenkov (?–?),⁴⁰ donated by Archpriest of the Kyiv Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Kliment Ioanikievich Fomenko (fig. 9) (1836 – after 1914),⁴¹ along with photographs of Kalmyk bakshees (lamas) and a Kalmyk astronomical table;
- a bronze statue of Buddha with Tibetan inscriptions from the Novokhopyorsk District of the Voronezh Governorate, donated by Cathedral Archpriest of the Kyiv Sophia Cathedral, Pyotr Gavrilovich Lebedintsev (1820–1896)⁴² (fig. 10);

³⁸ A. A. Dmitrievsky (1856–1929), born in the Astrakhan Province, a graduate of the Kazan Theological Academy, a professor in the Department of Church Archaeology and Liturgics at the Kiev Theological Academy, Honorary member of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society; a Russian Byzantinist, and a Church historian.

³⁹ An official of the imperial administration that headed a special board, known as the Kalmyk Administration Council, responsible for overseeing various aspects of life in the Kalmyk Steppe.

⁴⁰ Previously, Captain-Lieutenant (Court Counsellor) of the Guards Crew, K. I. Kostenkov served as the leader of the military-topographical Kum-Manych Expedition. In 1860–1861, this expedition conducted an “economic-statistical” study of the Kalmyk Steppe. Astronomical, topographical, and geological work was carried out, new communication routes were determined, and suitable locations for settlements were identified. The collected materials formed the basis for his own research. Not much is known about Kapiton Kostenkov except for a few episodes of his service and his publications about the Kalmyks. Thus, he was Manager of State Property and Chief Trustee of the Kalmyk People; he supported the proposal for the establishment of a settlement near a forest plantation that became known as Elista; he was Collegiate Counsellor (from 1877, Colonel), Actual State Counsellor (from 1879, Major General); he also assisted I. I. Mechnikov during his 1872–1874 expeditions to the Kalmyk Steppe.

⁴¹ Archpriest K. I. Fomenko (1836 – after 1914/1915), served at the Church of the Savior at Berestove in Kyiv and was a priest at the Church of Alexander Nevsky (until 1917; the church was destroyed in the mid-1930s). He studied at the Kyiv Theological School of St. Sophia, Kyiv Theological Seminary, and from 1859 to 1863 at the KTA. He was a member of the Church Archaeological Society, a representative of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, and the author of numerous theological works.

⁴² Petr Lebedintsev, mentor at the Kiev Theological Academy, editor of the “Kyiv Diocesan Gazette”, protopriest; from 1860 to 1868, he served as a law instructor at the gymnasium; historian, archaeologist, educator, journalist, and religious figure—he was a protopriest (from 1868 until the end of his life) at the Cathedral of St. Sophia. He was also the founder and first editor (1862–1874) of the “Kyiv Diocesan Gazette”; member of the Kyiv “Old Community” (a society of Ukrainian intelligentsia, acted from 1859 till 1876), a friend of many prominent figures in the Ukrainian intellectual, literary, and social movement; active member of the Historical Society named after Nestor the Chronicler at Kyiv University, as well as a member of the Commission for Analyzing Ancient Documents.

- an aquatint depicting the banner of the Kalmyk regiment of Prince Serebjab Tyumen (1774–1858)⁴³ (fig. 11), donated by Nikolay Fedotovych Belyashevsky (1867–1926);⁴⁴
- some other donations from individuals whose names have yet to be identified.

Only a few of the aforementioned gifts have been preserved. The contributions of Dmitrievsky, Lebedintsev, Belyashevsky, including the photographs and an enigmatic ‘astronomical table’ donated by Father Kliment, are evidently lost.

Kliment Fomenko transferred Kalmyk “burkhans” (sacred objects) to the CAM, which were donated by the descendants of Major General K. I. Kostenkov, the leader of the military-topographical Kum-Manych Expedition on the territory of Kalmykia in 1860–1861.⁴⁵ These items, belonging to Kostenkov and donated to the CAM by Priest Fomenko, known as “thangkas” or “zurug shuteen” in Kalmyk,⁴⁶ were identified through old museum numbers reflected in the published Index (Petrov 1897: 23–26). The thangkas are painted with adhesive paints on different mediums, including silk, cotton fabric, and paper. They depict figures from the Buddhist pantheon.⁴⁷ Seven thangkas feature inscriptions, one in Cyrillic script (in the old orthography) only, while the rest are in both Oirat (“*Todo Bičig*”) and Cyrillic scripts. The Oirat

⁴³ Serebdzhab (Sereb-Dzhap) Tyumen (1774–1858), a Kalmyk prince, Noyon of the Khosheutovsky Ulus in the Astrakhan Province, Russian Empire (now in the Kharabalinsky District, Astrakhan Oblast); founder of the Khosheutovsky Khurul, commander of the Second Astrakhan Kalmyk Regiment, participant in the Patriotic War of 1812, colonel (1816), recipient of Russian and foreign awards. In memory of the Kalmyks’ participation in the Patriotic War of 1812, he constructed the Khosheutovsky Khurul in the village of Tyumenevka (now the village of Rechnoe in the Kharabalinsky District of the Astrakhan Oblast). Alexander von Humboldt in 1829 and Alexandre Dumas on October 17–18, 1858, during their travels in Russia, were guests of Serebdzhab Tyumen; see Ilishkin 2010: 27–34.

⁴⁴ Nikolai Belyashevsky (or Biliashivsky), historian, museum curator, honorary member of the Poltava Church Historical and Archaeological Committee. He studied at the Law Faculty and attended lectures at the History and Philology Faculties of St. Vladimir’s Kyiv University, and he passed his final exams at the Novorossiysk University in Odessa. Belyashevsky was the organizer and director (1902–1923) of the Kyiv Art-Industrial and Scientific Museum. During World War I, he was appointed by the Imperial Academy of Sciences to protect cultural monuments in Galicia and Bukovina. Under the Ukrainian Central Rada, he served as the head of the Central Committee for the Protection of Ancient Monuments and Art in Ukraine. Under the Soviets, he remained in charge of the museum; a member of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (from 1919), and the author of numerous publications.

⁴⁵ See Petrov 1897: 23–26.

⁴⁶ Some details about the Kalmyk tradition of Buddhist iconography are presented in Nurova 2011.

⁴⁷ See Ogneva 2011: 93–102.

inscriptions were read and translated by Natalia Yakhontova, Svetlana Batyreva, and Evgeniy Bembeev.⁴⁸

The inscriptions in Todo Bičig script from three of these thangkas not only identify the figures but also mention the previously unknown artist, Belene Šobol, from the Kerait clan. He is also called 'getsel' (= 'getsül'), meaning a monk who has taken 36 monastic vows.

1. Shelf mark: 496 ЖВ (old shelf marks: 1927, 7692, 13, 313 ВК). Emchi = Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha (fig. 12).

Inscriptions on the recto side: 1) Left margin: (in Cyrillic) "По индѣйски: Бендарѣи" ("In Indian: Bendaryo [=Bhaiṣajyaguru?]); 2) Margin below: (in Cyrillic) "Оточи / богъ лѣкарей / Эмчи" ("Otochi / the god of healers / Emchi"); (in Oirat) "odoči buruxan" ("Burkhan Odochi/Otochi"); 3) Right margin: (in Oirat) "kerēd anggi belene šobol gecel zurubu" ("Drawn by Belene Šobol Getsel (=Getsül) from the Kerait clan"), (in Cyrillic) "по Тибетски Манли" ("In Tibetan: Manli (=Menla)").

2. Shelf mark: 498 ЖВ (old shelf marks: 1926, 7699, 315, ВК). Manza Shire = Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom (fig. 13).

Inscriptions on the recto side: 1) Margin below: (in Cyrillic) "Манза Шире / Богъ астрологов-зурхачи" ("Manza Shire / the god of *zurkhachi* astrologers"), (in Oirat) "zuruxači manzang širē" ("Manzang Shiren [=Mañjuśrī], [the protector? of] astrologers"); 2) Right margin: "kerēd anggi belene šobol gecel zuruba" ("Drawn by Belene Šobol Getsel from the Kerait clan").

3. Shelf mark: 501 ЖВ (old shelf marks: 1918, No. 3, 318 ВК). Shakjimini = the Buddha Śākyamuni (fig. 14).

Inscriptions on the recto side: 1) Margin below: (in Cyrillic) "Шакджимуни верховное божество" ("Shakjimini [=Śākyamuni] the supreme deity"), (in Oirat) "šačji-i muyini" ("Shakjimini"); 2) Right margin: "kerēd anggi belene šobol gecel zuruba" ("Drawn by Belene Šobol Getsel from the Kerait clan"). An inscription on the verso side: (in Cyrillic) "Шакджимуни" ("Shakjimini").

The four other thangkas, evidently produced by the same master, have similar bilingual inscriptions.

4. Shelf mark: 499 ЖВ (old shelf marks: 1919, 4, 316 ВК). Madira = Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future (fig. 15).

Inscriptions on the recto side: 1) Left margin: (in Cyrillic) "По Тибетски Джамба" ("In Tibetan, Jamba"); 2) Margin below: (in Cyrillic) "Майдере / по индѣйски / Верховное существо" ("Maidere [=Maitreya] / in Indian / the supreme deity"); 3) Right margin: (in Oirat) "madira" ("Madira [=Maitreya]"), (in Cyrillic) "По монгольски

⁴⁸ See Batyreva 2016: 129–134; Ogneva 2016. I also thank Anna Turanskaya, Jargal Badagarov, and Alla Sizova for several additional remarks in regard to these inscriptions.

Асаралъ гуута” (“In Mongolian, Asaral guuta [=Asaraqyitu ‘Compassionate’]). An inscription on the verso side: (in Cyrillic) “Майдере” (“Maidere”).

5. Shelf mark: 502 ЖВ (old shelf marks: 1928, 7689, 14, 319 ВК). Amidava = the Buddha Amitābha (fig. 16).

Inscriptions on the recto side: 1) Margin below: (in Cyrillic) “Авидва (покровитель покойников)” (“Avidva (the protector of deceased people)”); 2) Right margin: (in Oirat) “amidava” (“Amidava [=Amitābha]”). An inscription on the verso side: (in Cyrillic) “Авидва. 14” (“Avidva. 14”).

6. Shelf mark: 497 ЖВ (old shelf mark: 1917, 27, 2, 314 ВК). Ноҕон Дари Еке = the Green Mother Tārā (fig. 17).

Inscriptions on the recto side: 1) Margin below: (in Cyrillic) “Наганъ-Дар-Эке /Покровительница женщинъ при родахъ/” (“Nagan Dar Eke [=the Green Mother Tārā] / the Protectress of women during childbirth”); 2) Right margin: (in Oirat) “ноҕон дари еке” (“the Green Mother Dari [=Tārā]”), (in Cyrillic) “Перерождение Цаган-Даръ-Эке” (“The reincarnation of Tsagan Dar Eke [=the White Mother Tārā]”). An inscription on the verso side: (in Cyrillic) “Наганъ Даръ-Эке” (“Nagan Dar Eke”).

7. Shelf mark: 500 ЖВ (old shelf marks: 7668, 308 ВК). Namsarai = Vaiśravaṇa (fig. 18).

An inscription on the recto side, margin below: (in Cyrillic) “Намсара (Богъ богатства)” (“Namsara (the god of wealth)”). An inscription on the verso side: (in Cyrillic) “По монгольски Тенсон (Сокчинъ Кювенъ) по индѣйски: Бишараваръ” (“In Mongolian, Tensong (Sokchin Küwen [=Sonosuyči-yin köbegün]); In Indian, Bisharawar [=Vaiśravaṇa]”).

In the late 19th to early 20th century, several artists from the monasteries of the Don Host Oblast and the Maloderbetovsky Ulus of the Astrakhan Governorate were well-known among the Kalmyks. They included bagshi (master) Nemgirov, an icon painter from the Khurul of Batlayevskaya Stanitsa; Orgochko Jambaev, a skillful producer of burkhans (Buddha images); Dorzhi/Dortsia, a master of the Maloderbetovsky Khurul, who was the author of four images of White Tārā submitted to the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts.⁴⁹

Thus, more than a hundred years later, at the beginning of the 21st century, one more name was identified. Its bearer was evidently recognized in the Kalmyk iconographic tradition, but he became known to us only after the above-cited inscriptions were read by experts. The influence of the getsul Belene Shobol from the Kerait clan on his contemporaries in Kalmyk monasteries was undoubtedly

⁴⁹ See Batyreva 1991: 24; Batyreva 2009: 59; Zhitetsky 1893: 64.

significant. We can even probably talk about the Shobol school of iconography. Evidence of this is attested in some of the Kalmyk icons, currently preserved in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), RAS, in Saint Petersburg. Notably, the Kalmyk thangka depicting the bodhisattva Tārā from Admiral C. Possiet's collection (No. 470-4)⁵⁰ stylistically closely resembles the thangka presenting the bodhisattva Padmapāṇi (No. 5528-2).⁵¹

Apart from the thangkas depicting figures of the pantheon, Kliment Fomenko also presented one more. It was recorded as "a linen Kalmyk burkhan", under the number 1915 (Petrov 1897: 23–26); current access number: 482 ЖБ (old shelf marks: 1915, KK297, 7673, 697, 297 BK). As it turned out, the thangka depicts the "Wheel of Existence", Bhavacakra (Tibetan: *srid pa'i 'khor lo*; Kalmyk: *sansar-un kürde*), the Buddhist picture of universe (fig. 19). The "Wheel of Existence", grasped by a monster, is depicted in the form of concentric circles. The outer circle consists of twelve scenes numbered 1 to 12, reflecting the everyday life of people, symbolically reproducing the twelve links of dependent origination. The second circle is divided into six sections, each of which symbolically reflects the life and existence of beings comprising the Wheel of Life: 1 – the realm of gods, 2 – the realm of humans, 3 – the realm of asuras, 4 – the realm of animals, 5 – the realm of hungry ghosts, 6 – the realm of hell-dwellers. The next circle is divided by color into two fields: black and white. On the black field, a demon pulls sinners into the abode of hungry ghosts; on the white field, a monk leads those who have rid themselves of negative accumulations to new rebirths. Finally, the central circle contains images of a pig, a snake, and a bird in the middle, symbolizing the three types of obscurations—ignorance, anger (envy), and passion (greed)—that bind beings to cyclic existence. The earth is represented by towering mountains; the sky, filled with deep blue, is occupied by clouds and plumes of fragrant smoke.

To the left of the monster, the figure of Buddha Śākyamuni hovers in space, having transcended existence; to the right, the Wheel of Teaching is depicted. The "Wheel of Existence" is painted on primed fabric using adhesive pigments and inscribed with gold, mounted on a blue silk frame, with a covering of yellow silk (Tibetan: *zhal khebs*).

⁵⁰ Constantine Possiet (1819–1899) was a Russian admiral (1882), Minister of Communications (1874–1888), a member of the State Council (1888), and a passionate collector. Like many other collectors who understood the scientific and museum significance of objects, he bequeathed his collection to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography. He likely acquired the above-mentioned thangka around 1868 when he traveled along the Volga River and the Caspian Sea; see Ivanov 2009.

⁵¹ Published in Ivanov 2009: 29 (No. 470-4) and 32 (No. 5528-2). See also Ivanov 2005.

On the front side of the thanangka, Cyrillic inscriptions in cursive (in ink) identify the depicted characters and the narrative; a Tibetan inscription in gold is written on a red-painted plaquette. At the upper right of the Buddha Śākyamuni, a moon is depicted, and he points towards it with his hand; beneath the figure of the Buddha, an inscription reads: “Бурханъ Шикджи Мунѣ” (“Burkhan Shikdji Muni” (the Buddha Śākyamuni). The central part of the thanangka is occupied by the depiction of a gigantic monster clamping the “Wheel of Existence” with its fangs and claws; at the bottom, by the ankle of the monster’s right leg, an inscription reads: “Мангусъ” (“Mangus”). In this context, Mangus corresponds to the demon Mara embodying “Eternal Time”, which governs all, or “Eternal Load of Desires/Passions/Greed”, giving rise to one desire after another. To the right of the monster, beneath the hermit’s image (at the monster’s knee), an inscription reads: “Даянчи” (“Dayanchi”, “Hermit”). To the right of the monster, beyond the wheel, in the center, on a blue background, “Небо” (“Heaven”) is written; on a green background, “Земля” (“Earth”) is written. Arabic numerals from one to twelve are marked from left to right in a circle, depicting the sequence of twelve links of dependent origination and the six realms where beings reside. Above and to the right of the monster, from top to bottom, the Wheel of Teaching is presented; below on the red plaquette, the Tibetan inscription reads: *brtsam par bya zhing dbyung bar bya// sangs rgyas bstan la ’jug par bya// ’dam bu’i khyim la glang chen bzhin//’chi bdag sde ni gzhom par bya//* — “[One] should cultivate [merits] and cast away [defilements]. // [One] should enter the Buddha’s teachings. // Like a great elephant [breaking] a reed house, // [One] should defeat the armies of the Lord of Death”.⁵² Below, on a cloud, “Избавление” (“Liberation”) is written (fig. 19).

Only in 1969 did the Museum acquire a new Kalmyk thanangka as a part of the collection of Buddhist arts purchased from Vasily Velichko, Moscow.⁵³ The thanangka bears a dedicatory inscription indicating its Kalmyk origin.⁵⁴ According to the inscription, the thanangka was a gift to Ilya Ilyich Mechnikov (1845–1916)⁵⁵ from the Kalmyk people as a

⁵² The same stanza and another variant of its English translation are published in Sopa 1984: 128, 131.

⁵³ About this person, see Fil 2016.

⁵⁴ See Ogneva 2002: 18–24.

⁵⁵ Ilya Ilyich Mechnikov (Élie Metchnikoff) (1845–1916) was a Russian and French microbiologist, cytologist, embryologist, immunologist, physiologist, and pathologist born in Ukraine (village of Ivanovka, Kupyansk district, the Kharkov Province of the then Russian Empire). He was an honorary member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1902) and a Nobel Prize laureate in the field of physiology and medicine (1908). He graduated from Kharkov (Kharkiv) University, taught at Novorossiysk University in Odessa. In 1887, he moved to

token of gratitude for his anti-epidemic work (fig. 20). According to the memoirs of Olga Mechnikova,⁵⁶ “the entry into the steppes was festive: a delegation of Kalmyks at the Kalmyk Bazaar (now the settlement of Privolzhsky within the boundaries of Astrakhan) met the mission and presented Ilya Ilyich with a bronze Buddha” (Mechnikova 1926). In their estate of Chervlenoye in the Maloderbetovsky Ulus, the Mechnikov couple and members of the expedition were received by the Tundutov family,⁵⁷ representatives of one of the most distinguished families in Kalmykia.⁵⁸ The *thangka* depicts One Hundred Deities of Joy (or *Tuṣitā* Heaven).⁵⁹ The painting is executed on primed fabric using adhesive pigments, with a “rainbow” made of red and yellow colors, mounted on a green satin frame, and the zhal-

Paris where he worked at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Engaging in research in the field of anthropology, he conducted two expeditions to the Astrakhan and Stavropol steppes, where he studied the appearance and life of the Kalmyks and the Kazakhs (1872–1874). In 1911, he led an epidemiological expedition focused on combating tuberculosis in Kalmykia; see Peretiako et al. 2020.

⁵⁶ Olga Nikolaevna Mechnikova, née Belokopytova (1858–1944), was the second wife of Ilya Mechnikov (since 1874). Until Mechnikov’s passing in 1916, the couple lived together for over thirty years. Olga was Mechnikov’s closest friend and assistant in his scientific work, translator of his writings. She was also a talented artist, exhibiting her sculptures and paintings at solo exhibitions in Paris. After her husband’s death, Mechnikova published a wonderful book-length memoir in French entitled *La vie d’Élie Metchnikoff* (Paris, 1920).

⁵⁷ The Tundutov family was considered sacred, referred to as “ТЭНГЭР йозурта” (“Heavenly Predestination”) among the Kalmyks. The Tundutovs of Maloderbetov descent traced their maternal lineage to the descendants of Genghis Khan and were related to almost all the khans of Kalmykia. The Tundutovs were the first to adopt a settled way of life. However, all generations of the family, including those who met Mechnikov, such as Elzyata Tundutova, the widow of the noyon Tseren-David Tundutov (1860–1907), a member of the First State Duma, the Russian parliament, from the Astrakhan and Stavropol provinces, preserved and upheld Kalmyk Buddhist vows, rituals, and customs. Tseren-David Tundutov received a special seal, the “eternal visa”, as a gift from the 13th Dalai Lama, granting him access to Tibet. Elzyata Tundutova was a member of the Russian Geographical Society, and many scholars, such as Mongolists Andrey D. Rudnev (1878–1958), G. J. Ramstedt (1873–1950), sought her advice. The Tundutovs provided funds for the journey to Tibet for the renowned Baaz Menkedzhuyev (1846–1903) and supported the family of Nomto Ochirov (1886–1960), the first explorer of the Kalmyk epic. Born to Tseren-David and Elzyata, Danzan Tundutov (1888–1923) was the founder of the Kalmyk Cossack force, with the goal of uniting all Oirat regions along the Volga, which had been divided among several Russian provinces since the late 18th century. As one of the Cossack leaders, he actively participated in the Civil War in Russia.

⁵⁸ See Archive of the Russian Geographical Society. Coll. 18. Inv. 3. Item 694.

⁵⁹ In Tibetan: *dga’ ldan lha brgya ma*, or Ganden lha gyama, see a detailed analysis of this composition by Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche (1946–2023), a master of Tibetan Buddhism in the Gelug tradition, the leader of the international network of Buddhist centers under the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (Zopa 1986).

khebs (cover) is preserved. The dedicatory inscription, in modern Russian language (with modern spelling and punctuation), consists of five lines and is placed on the reverse side of the *thangka*, at the top left corner: “Подарок И. И. Мечникову / от населения за работу / противэпидемическ[ого] характера / совместно с проф[ессором] Л. А. Тарасевичем / Из коллекции Тарасевич Юл[ии] Львовны” (“Gift to I. I. Mechnikov / from the local people for his work / of an anti-epidemic nature / jointly with Professor L. A. Tarasevich / From the collection of Tarasevich, Yulia Lvovna”).⁶⁰

In the center of the *thangka*, amidst the clouds of offering incense, Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa (1357–1419), the reformer of Tibetan Buddhism and founder of the Gelug school, is depicted, accompanied by two disciples. At the upper part is Tuṣitā Heaven, also known as Galden, the pure land of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future. To his right, the image of the bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteśvara, is depicted, while to his left is the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. At the bottom, the human realm is represented. To his right stands the Dharmapāla Chögyal (in one of his forms), in the center is an offering table with gifts, and in the lower left corner, a disciple with an offering.

Ilya Mechnikov, a pioneer in comparative pathology and embryology and a Nobel Prize laureate, undertook two trips to the Kalmyk steppes: in the early 1870s and together with colleagues from the Pasteur Institute in 1911. In the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, the following materials are preserved within the Nobel Prize laureate’s collection: 1. Notebooks titled “The First Expedition to the Kalmyk Steppes for Anthropological Purposes, 1871–1873”, containing sketches of people; 2. “Materials from the expedition to the Kyrgyz Steppes in 1911. Notebooks with data on the examination of the local population for tuberculosis”; 3. “Diaries, notes, and observations made during the trip to the Astrakhan Steppes from May 15 to August 31, 1911”; 4. An album with 23 photographs from the 1911 expedition, and one additional photo.⁶¹ Drawings by Mechnikov have been preserved in written materials, including a full-length profile sketch of a Kalmyk, a detailed depiction of a suborgan (stupa) with indications of its color scheme, and a bust image of a

⁶⁰ See Ogneva 1997: 4–13; Ogneva 1998: 277–284.

⁶¹ Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Collection 584: 1) Inv. 1. Item 261; 2) Inv. 3. Item 13; 3) Inv. 2. Item 4; 4) Inv. 2. Items 294 and 295. On the history of Mechnikov’s archival collection, see Dirbe 1977.

Kalmyk.⁶² During his trip in 1872, K. I. Kostenkov, the chief patron of the Kalmyk people, provided substantial assistance to the scholar.⁶³

Reflecting on Ilya Mechnikov's early travels, Olga Mechnikova wrote that in 1874, when Mechnikov was collecting ethnographic information, he became acquainted with "a Kalmyk priest—baksha, who told him so much that was interesting and instructive about Buddhist religion and the organization of the clergy that it aroused his desire to travel with him to Tibet... However, this plan was not realized" (Mechnikova 1926). During his last expedition, he was accompanied by Lev Tarasevich (1868–1927),⁶⁴ Étienne Burnet (1873–1960),⁶⁵ and other members of the expedition. Since Lev Tarasevich was part of the last expedition, this establishes the upper limit—the year 1911—beyond which the thangka could not have been created. In the Dundu Khurul of the Maloderbetovsky Ulus, by the time of Mechnikov's visit with his colleagues, a renowned workshop was in operation with well-known artists. It is quite likely that the depiction of the thangka of One Hundred Deities of Joy could have been painted in the Dundu Khurul workshop. An indirect confirmation might be the thangka's central part, where Tsongkhapa Lobzang Dakpa with his disciples is painted. The fact that the prominent scientist was accompanied by two of his closest students, among other things, could have influenced the choice of the gift. Furthermore, the winter temple of the Dundu Khurul was dedicated to Lobzang Dakpa and bore his

⁶² I would like to express my sincere gratitude and fond remembrance of Mrs. Aija Dirbe (1932–2014) for her kind drawing my attention to the Moscow Archive of Ilya Mechnikov.

⁶³ See Alekseeva, Lantsanova 2006: 107–111.

⁶⁴ Lev Aleksandrovich Tarasevich (1868–1927) was an immunologist, epidemiologist, microbiologist, pathologist, healthcare organizer, and medical scientist. He held a Doctor of Medicine degree, was a professor, a member of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (1926). He graduated from Novorossiysk University (Odessa) and the Medical Faculty of Université de Paris. From 1900 to 1902, he worked at the Pasteur Institute in Paris under Mechnikov. He was one of the followers of Mechnikov's cellular theory of immunity. Since 1907, he taught in Moscow, in various universities. During World War I, Tarasevich served as the chief military field sanitary inspector of the Russian army. He initiated and organized the vaccination of the army against typhoid and cholera. Under his guidance, a program of anti-epidemic measures was developed for the Medical Council under the Provisional Government.

⁶⁵ Étienne Burnet (1873–1960) was a French microbiologist. He initially studied literature and philosophy at the Université de Paris, then switched to the medical faculty in 1898 and graduated in 1904. He worked at the Pasteur Institute under the guidance of Émile Roux, Albert Borrel, Albert Calmette, and Ilya Mechnikov. In 1936, he became the director of the Pasteur Institute in Tunisia, a position he held honorably until the end of his life. In 1911, Burnet, along with Mechnikov and Tarasevich, studied the epidemiology of plague in the steppes of the Astrakhan province that included the territories inhabited by Kalmyks. After World War I, Burnet was a member of the hygiene commission of the League of Nations.

name. As of today, this remains the most recent Kalmyk thangka identified in the Khanenko Museum's collection.

The Catalog of the Church Archeological Museum mentions "a Kalmyk book in a cloth" with the number 1992 (Petrov 1897: 23–26). Using this old number, it was possible to locate it in the collection of the Institute of Manuscripts under the new code: Coll. 74, No. 72 (old number: 1992, inv. No. 19524) (fig. 21). Unfortunately, the provenance of this "Kalmyk book in a cloth" has not yet been determined. However, it has been ascertained that the book is written in the Oirat language, in Todo Bičig script. The first and, so far, the only identification of its contents has been made by Natalia Yakhontova, with additional consultation from Svetlana Batyreva.⁶⁶

Following an old tradition dating back to Zaya Pandita (1599–1662), the beginning of the text presents its title in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian. In this manuscript, the Tibetan and Sanskrit titles are reproduced using the Todo Bičig script. N. Yakhontova provided me with the Oirat title of the manuscript: "Sayitur nomloxoi erdeniyin sang gereliyin cočcokemēkü šastir" ("A śāstra entitled 'The well-instructing treasure of jewels, a heap of light'"), which resembles a title of a subhaṣita. The Oirat script is also used to render the Sanskrit and Tibetan titles. The Sanskrit one is recorded as follows: "Sub hata pra bha ska tā shā stra nā ma". It seems to have been derived from "Subha[ṣi]ta-prabhā[skandha]-nāma-śāstra". The Tibetan title can be reconstructed as *Legs-bshad 'od-kyi phung-po zhes-bya-ba'i bstan-chos* ("A śāstra titled 'The well-instructing [treatise], a heap of light'"). A Sanskrit or Tibetan treatise with such titles has not been identified so far.

The colophon to the text states that the Oirat translation was carried out by Gelong Güüši.⁶⁷ The paper is Russian, produced by the Yaroslavl factory of Sava Yakovlev at the end of the 18th century as indicated by the watermark of the coat of arms of the Yaroslavl province and the Cyrillic letters "ЯМСЯ" ("Yaroslavl Manufacture of Savva Yakovlev"),⁶⁸ found on folio 94.⁶⁹

The Institute of Manuscripts also houses a Tibetan manuscript which was owned by Count Jan Potocki (1761–1815) (fig. 22)⁷⁰ (Ogneva

⁶⁶ I would like to express sincere gratitude to my colleagues for their help.

⁶⁷ According to Natalia Yakhontova, the translator with this name is mentioned in the 19th century texts (personal communication).

⁶⁸ See Klepikov 1978: 62–63.

⁶⁹ Folios 1, 2, 3, and 123 bear the stamp that reads "Лаврский музей" ("The Lavra Museum"), indicating that the manuscript was held for some time in the collection of the Museum of Cults and Everyday Life within the premises of Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, before it was transferred to the Institute of Manuscripts.

⁷⁰ Jan (in Russian tradition, Ivan Osipovich) Potocki was a privy councillor, writer, historian, ethnographer, geographer, and archaeologist, an honorary member of

2009: 20–28). Its current shelf mark is Coll. VIII 561/11; the old shelf marks are: 519, “РКП. № 11”, “УН. 561/11”⁷¹ (fig. 23); the first of the old shelf marks is written on a small wrapper that also has an inscription “Manuscript Thibetan” and a red wax seal with the coat of arms of the Potocki family (fig. 23a). The text is a copy of the “Dorji Jodwa” or “Vajracchedikā”.

The sūtra is written in black ink in a large, beautiful *dbu-can* handwriting on Russian (?) paper that shows signs of water damage, slight staining, and yellowing due to time. It features Tibetan foliation (on the left side of the recto leaf), 41 folios, of which only 32 are preserved, with folios 29–35 and 37–39 missing. The first page is blank, but the title is indicated on f. 1b in Sanskrit (in Tibetan transliteration) and in Tibetan script, as is customary for canonical works. There is a damaged marginal note in French on f. 5a, its tentative reading being as follows: “F.[oliis] cu[i]lle en langue [Thib]etane” (“Content of the leaves, in the Tibetan language”). The manuscript lacks a colophon. (fig. 23, 23b.)

Some folios have fragments of a watermark (fig. 24) that seems to be a variation of the one indicated in the catalogue of Sokrat Klepikov as belonging to the papermill of Afanasy Goncharov (?–1788): it combines the “Pro Patria” composition and the monogram ‘AG’; Klepikov dates two variants of this watermark 1742 and 1744 (Klepikov 1959: 75, 246, Nos. 867–868) (fig. 24a). Therefore, it seems that the manuscript can be roughly dated the middle of the 18th century. According to the opinion of Alexander Zorin,⁷² the handwriting is very typical for the 18th century Kalmyk manuscripts. Hence, of several assumptions that could be made concerning the way the manuscript came into the possession of Count Potocki, the most probable is that it was passed to him along with the documents of the Kalmyk Khan Amursana (1722–1757) by the Polish descendants of the rebellious khan. Amursana’s grandson even accompanied Potocki on his journey along the Volga in 1797.⁷³

the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences. The author of the immortal novel “Manuscript Found in Saragossa”, he was the last European encyclopedist, and its first romanticist. He made several trips to the remote parts of the Russian Empire and to China. He had an interest in Buddhism and carried with him an album of images (burkhans) depicting various figures of the Buddhist pantheon.

⁷¹ The manuscript was passed to Kyiv University along with materials from the Kremenets Lyceum when the Saint Vladimir Kyiv University Library was formed in the 1830s.

⁷² Personal communication, August 2023.

⁷³ See Potocki 1896: 320. (In the Russian translation, the name ‘Amursana’ is incorrectly rendered as ‘Амурфана’, =‘Amurfana’, evidently due to the wrong reading of the letter ‘long s’ used in the original edition.) Amursana, the Kalmyk Khan (1722–1757), belonged to the ruling nobility of the Dzungar Khanate with ancestral domains in Tarbagatai. He was the last khan of

Another possibility is that the old manuscript was presented to Potocki by somebody he encountered during his journeys, be that Moravian missionaries in Sarepta⁷⁴ or Tibetan and Kalmyk Buddhist monks in the camp of the above-mentioned Kalmyk noyon (prince) Serebjab Tyumen (Potocki 1896). The count had access to Buddhist artefacts in Kyakhta⁷⁵ and Urga (now Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia) in 1805–1806, while leading an academic part of the embassy of Count Yury Golovkin (1762–1846) to the Chinese Emperor's court.⁷⁶ However, it is hardly possible that the Kalmyk manuscript would have been obtained by him there.

Another manuscript of “Vajracchedikā” found in the territory of Ukraine at the end of the 18th century can also be mentioned. This is a scroll excavated from the earth during geological surveys in the territory of the Don Cossacks (present-day Luhansk region, part of modern Ukraine). The scroll, which exists as two items since the original big scroll was cut into two parts, was passed to the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1796 and is now kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS. The scrolls are meticulously conserved by Liubov Kriakina and have been analyzed by Alexander Zorin, according to whom they represent “unique examples of Kalmyk

the Dzungars, and his actions led to the downfall of the Dzungar Khanate and the subjugation of the Dzungars by the Chinese in the 18th century. Amursana participated in the Chinese occupation of Dzungaria, hoping to become its khan, but in vain. He headed an Oirat anti-Chinese movement that was eventually defeated. Amursana fled to Russia in the summer of 1757, where he died of smallpox. His wife, Bitya, sought refuge in Kalmykia and later moved to St. Petersburg, where she passed away in 1761. Her son from a previous marriage, Puntsuk, converted to Orthodoxy. See Zlatkin 1958.

⁷⁴ Sarepta was a former colony of the Moravian Brethren, known as the Herrnhuters, a community of followers of the Czech preacher Jan Hus (1370–1415). They adhered to an ascetic way of life. The settlement was established according to the decree of Catherine II in 1765; it is now part of the city of Volgograd.

⁷⁵ Kyakhta (Buryat: Хяагга хото; founded in 1727, known as Troitskosavsk until 1734) was a trading settlement that gained the status of a city in 1805. It is currently considered a town, the administrative center of the Kyakhtinsky District of the Republic of Buryatia. Historically, it was a major hub for Russo-Chinese trade, although its significance diminished after the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Kyakhta served as the starting or ending point for numerous research expeditions into Central Asia, including those led by Nikolay Przhevalsky (1839–1888), Petr Kozlov (1863–1935), Sven Hedin (1865–1952), and others.

⁷⁶ Count Yury Alexandrovich Golovkin (1762–1846) was a statesman, actual Privy Councillor, and senator. He was born in Lausanne and received his education in Paris. In 1805, he led a mission to establish trade relations between Russia and China. This mission was intended to address several political and trade matters concerning Kyakhta, Canton, and a trading point on the Bukhtarma River. However, the mission proved to be unsuccessful. Golovkin, refusing to fully participate in the ceremonial reception (which involved triple kneeling and a ninefold kowtow ritual), disrupted its execution.

Tibetan manuscripts from the 18th century, not preserved within Kalmykia itself" (Zorin, Kriakina 2020: 50).⁷⁷

The discovery of this scroll once again confirmed the significance of the "Dorje Chodpa" Sūtra among the Kalmyks. According to research by Delyash Muzraeva, this text should be present on the household altar of every home, to bring and safeguard happiness and well-being to the family. Believers held the conviction that storing, reciting, and copying this sūtra would bring practical benefits to anyone engaging in these practices: all sins would be forgiven and any obstacles to achieving one's desires would be eliminated. Reading and copying the sūtra was supposed to lead to the accumulation of religious merits, which would prevent unfavorable rebirths, especially in hell (Muzraeva 2012). Illiterate believers who could not read the "Dorje Chodpa" regularly approached their ancestral temple (khurul) to have it "revived" (Kalmyk: *эмруллаһи*), meaning that a spiritual person would read it aloud in their home. To ensure that the blessings of the sūtra extended to all family members, it became necessary to include their names in the text of the sūtra itself. Consequently, in the Kalmyk Buddhist tradition, "Dorje Chodpa" transformed into an equivalent of the Orthodox Christian "Pomianik" or Psalter, where the memory of family members spanning generations was preserved. Due to further sacralization of the sūtra, any sacred book could be referred to as "Dorji Jodwa" or "Jodwa" by laypeople.

In the initial period of contacts between Ukrainian Christian priests and Kalmyks, conditions were established for the formation of an ethno-confessional group of baptized Kalmyks, the emergence of settlements in the steppe, and the establishment of educational institutions. Simultaneously, a gradual division occurred within Kalmyk society, creating a rift between those who adhered to their ancestral faith, Buddhism, and Christian neophytes, as well as between settled Kalmyks and those leading a nomadic way of life. A

⁷⁷ One more item related to "Vajracchedikā" and Ukraine may be mentioned here: a folio from a (Kalmyk?) manuscript of this sūtra, written on black paper in silver ink, was found in Bessarabia by General Ivan Inzov (1768–1845) and passed to Pyotr Arakcheev (1780–1841), who served as the Kyiv commandant. In June 1824, he sent it to his brother, the notorious Russian statesman Aleksei Arakcheev (1769–1834). The latter presented it to the Public Library in Saint Petersburg (currently, the Russian National Library). It has the access code Dorn 853 (Vasilieva 2020: 82, 239, 288). Another folio in Tibetan found in Bessarabia, with the beginning of "The Hymn to Tārā in Twenty-One Stanzas", was later passed to the Asiatic Museum by Nikolai Khanykov (1822–1878) (Khanykov 1856). I thank Anna Turanskaya for the information about these two folios from Bessarabia.

system of institutionalized education did not develop, and the first translations of Christian texts carried out by Ukrainian missionaries were lost.⁷⁸ Despite some clergy managing to return to their homeland, no material evidence—such as texts or examples of visual or decorative-applied art—has survived.

The artifacts of Kalmyk spiritual heritage preserved in Kyiv might not be extensive in volume, but they have a significant historical dimension and raise a few intriguing questions. The visual (iconographic) material represents different artistic schools that existed in Kalmykia during the second half of the 19th century, including *thangkas* signed by their author. For the first time in the last hundred years, a new name is introduced into art history as a master of Kalmyk/Oirat sacred painting—Shobol Getsul from the Kerait lineage. Written materials are represented by Oirat (Todo Bičig) and Tibetan texts. The manuscript in Oirat language, whose title defines it as a *subhaṣita*, has yet to be conclusively identified and requires further detailed study. The “*Vajracchedikā-sūtra*” in Tibetan can be dated to the late 18th to early 19th centuries—the period when its owner, Polish writer and orientalist Jan Potocki, traveled through the Kalmyk lands along the Volga River. The source from which he acquired the manuscript remains uncertain, but this event was most probably connected with his time spent among the Kalmyks or his travels to Urga (modern-day Ulaanbaatar). “*Dorje Chodpa*”, known among the Kalmyks as “*Dorjo Zhodvo*”, seems to be the first Buddhist text in the lands of Ukraine that has survived from those distant times to the present day.

Abbreviations

CAM	Church-Archaeological Museum
KMA	Kyiv-Mohyla Academy
KTA	Kyiv Theological Academy

⁷⁸ In the 21st century, Ukrainian Protopriest Igor Shvets continued the historical connections between graduates of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the Kalmyks by dedicating a special chapter of his dissertation to Christianity among the Kalmyks (Shvets 2001).

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FIGURES



Fig. 1. The Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and its students. Engraving of the 18th century



Fig. 3. Portrait of Peter the Great by A. P. Antropov, 1772. (Canvas, oil)
The Taganrog Art Museum



Fig. 2. Portrait of Metropolitan Petro Mohyla, 17th century. (Canvas, oil)



Fig. 4. Portrait of Archbishop Lavrentiy (Gorka) by an unknown artist. 19th century



Fig. 5. View of St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral in Kyiv before 1917. Postcard



Fig. 6. The Vydubychi Monastery in Kyiv. Etching by Taras Shevchenko, 1844



Fig. 7. Map of the Stavropol Region, 1755, with the administrative center in Stavropol (currently, Tolyatti)



Fig. 8. The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv.
Photo taken on October 10, 2022



Fig. 9. Photo of Protopriest Kliment Fomenko (1836 – after 1914), who donated Kalmyk thangkas from the collection of Kapiton Kostenkov (19th century) to the CAM



Fig. 10. Photo of Cathedral Protopriest Pyotr Lebedintsev of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv



Fig. 11. Portrait of Kalmyk Princes Tyumen (from right to left: brothers Serebjab, Batur, and Tseren-Norbo) by Karl Hampeln, first half of the 1820s. The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



Fig. 12. Emchi (Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha), by Belene Shobol. 496 ЖВ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 13. Manza Shire (Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom), by Belene Shobol. 498 ЖВ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 14. Shakjimuni (the Buddha Śākyamuni), by Belene Shobol.
501 ЖВ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 15. Madira (Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future), by Belene Shobol. 499 ЖБ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 16. Amidava (the Buddha Amitābha), by Belene Shobol.
502 ЖВ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 17. Noyon Dari Eke (the Green Mother Tārā), by Belene Shobol. 497 ЖВ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 18. Namsarai (Vaiśravaṇa), god of wealth, by Belene Shobol.
498 ЖБ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 19. *Sansar-un kürde*, or *Bhavacakra*, the "Wheel of Existence".
Thangka, Kalmykia, the 19th century.
482 ЖВ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 20. *Dga' ldan lha brgya ma*, One Hundred Deities of Joy.
Thangka, Kalmykia, the 19th or early 20th century.
462 ЖБ, the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum, Kyiv



Fig. 21. *Sayitur nomloxoi erdeniyin sang gereliyin çoqço kemëkü şastir* (A şastra titled 'The well-instructing treasure of jewels, a heap of light'). Manuscript, Kalmykia, the 19th century. Fund 74, No. 72. The Institute of Manuscripts, Kyiv



Fig. 22. Portrait of Jan Nepomucen Potocki z Podhajec, by A. Varnek, 1810. (Canvas, oil.) Łańcut Castle Museum, Poland



Fig. 23a. The Piława coat of arms of the Potocki Family

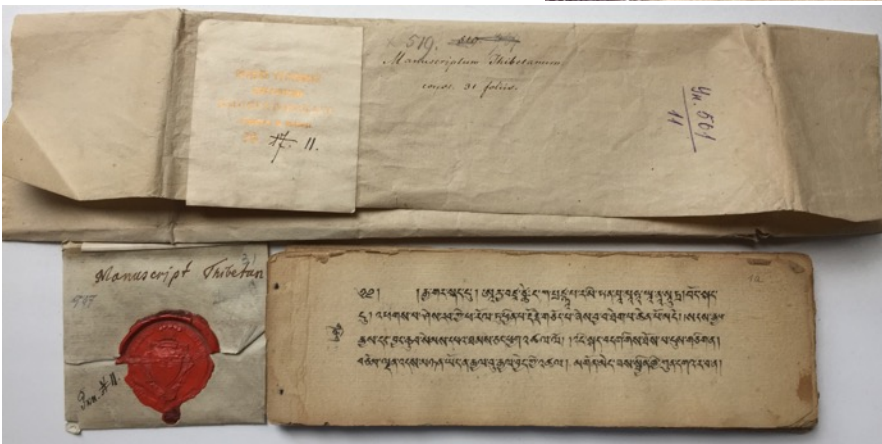


Fig. 23. “Dorji Jodwa”, or “Vajrachhedika”: f. 1b of the text. Manuscript, Kalmykia, presumably the middle of the 18th century. Two paper wrappers with inventory inscriptions and the red wax seal with the coat of arms of the Potocki Family. VIII 561/11. The Institute of Manuscripts, Kyiv

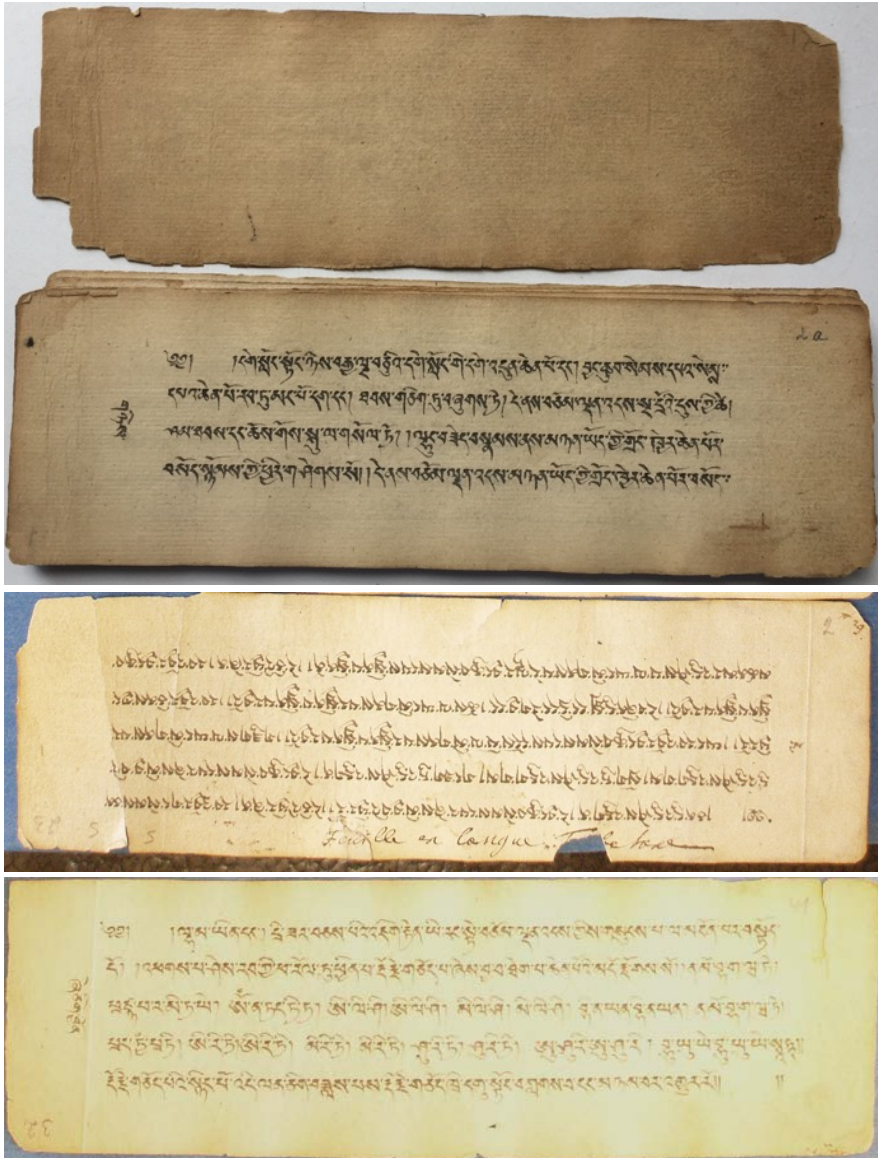


Fig. 23b. “Dorji Jodwa”, or “Vajracchedikā”: ff. 1a, 2a, 5a, 41a of the text VIII 561/11. The Institute of Manuscripts, Kyiv

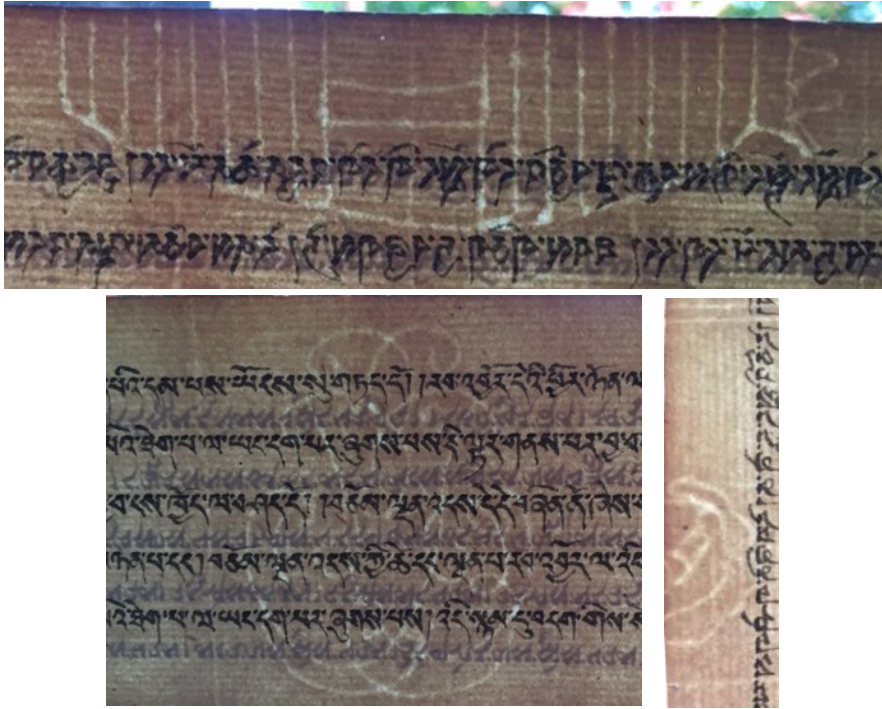


Fig. 24. VIII 561/11: Fragments of the watermark

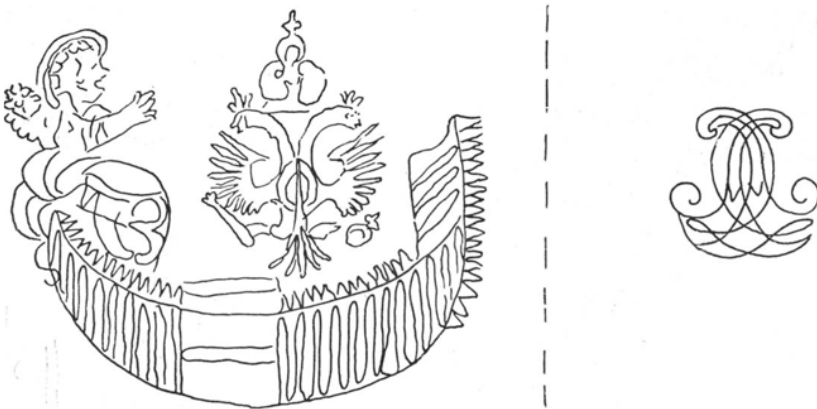


Fig. 24a. To compare: a similar watermark dated the early 1740s (Klepikov 1959: Nos. 867–868)

