

Dzhomba: Kalmyk Tea: Poetry, Legends, History, and Recipes

Nikolai Burlakoff

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Dzhomba: Kalmyk Tea is a study of the central food dish in the life of the Kalmyk people--a Mongol ethnicity, living in Russia for over 400 years. It is a collection of ethnographic information, ritual practices, folkloric texts, poetry, culinary descriptions, literary commentary, historic, and explanatory information. Most of the literary texts are presented in English, Russian, and Kalmyk and explanatory material in English. Translations of poems are the work of different translators, many of whom are recognized poets in their own right. Two National Poets of the Republic of Kalmykia are contributors to the project. The book traces the evolution of Kalmyk tea (dzhomba) from an everyday food dish, connected to the Kalmyk conception of the sacred, to a drink that has become a marker of ethnicity, largely serving a symbolic and group-integrative function. The first known Western reactions to the tea by literary giants Alexander Pushkin and Alexandre Dumas, père are part of the historic narrative. The book is a multi-year effort of an international team of scholars, poets, and translators.



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