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_Buddhists, Shamans, and Soviets: Rituals of History in Post-Soviet Buryatia_ is an essential contribution to a growing body of English-language ethnographic literature on Buryatia and the Cis-Baikal Buryats of Ulan-Ude in particular. The author examines ritual practice across civic, Buddhist, and shamanic settings and documents how participants speak about the past in order to make sense of the post-Soviet present. In each of the rituals Quijada examines, participants speak about the past couched within particular genres of historical discourse. Although the historical knowledge produced through ritual practice destabilizes already fragile constructs of a Buryat community, Quijada argues that they also offer creative resources for Buryats as they rethink who they are and where they are going in the context of prolonged ideological, political, social, and economic instability.

Quijada’s book is an exercise in what the author calls an anthropology of history, “the study of how knowledge of the past is produced in the present, and what kinds of identities are imagined in doing so” (7). To carry out this task, the author draws on a dense theoretical framework. J.L. Austin’s distinction between constative and performative speech acts provides Quijada with a vocabulary to parse the truth value of statements about the past from the rhetorical effect of referencing a past event in a particular context. Quijada notes that her interlocutors speak about the past according to particular generic conventions and evidentiary standards to produce what Mikhail Bakhtin has called a chronotope: a specific relationship between modes of time and space that shape the subjectivities of a past and present imagined Buryat community. The civic, Buddhist, and shamanic ritual practices Quijada observes produce visions of a Buryat community with profoundly different contours from one ritual context to the next. Quijada’s point is that none of the chronotopes produced in ritual performance form a stable, dominant vision of a Buryat community persisting from past to present. Rather, “rituals evoke, perform, and embody time in profoundly different ways, producing not only new historical knowledge, but different chronotopes” (12).

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The book is divided into six ethnographic chapters, each attending to a specific chronotope. The production of history is particularly relevant in the multiethnic and multireligious Buryat context as different histories and their interpretations contradict, coincide, and coexist in simultaneity. In this respect, the book’s first chapter deserves attention as it documents how multiple genres of historical discourse emerge in the setting of an inauguration of a stupa (Bur. Suburgan, a Buddhist monument marking holy places or commemorating important figures) for the reincarnate lama Dashi-Dorzho Etigelov.

As Buck Quijada’s interlocutors explain it, Etigelov “left” (Rus. – ushēl) the Buryat community in 1927 and entered a state somewhere between life and death. In 2002, Etigelov’s body was exhumed and found to be in a state of miraculous preservation. Etigelov’s body is displayed on Buddhist holy days and attracts visitors from near and afar. The local Buddhist organization that houses Etigelov’s body has emerged as an authority managing the heritage of a unique Buryat Buddhism. As participants in the inauguration ritual comment on Etigelov, a recursive Buddhist chronotope emerges that locates his body in the past, present, and future simultaneously – his reincarnation at birth, his reappearance in the form of undecayed body, and as a Bodhisattva, an enlightened being who will return to earth to help others achieve enlightenment. The Buddhist chronotope is made meaningful through its coexistence alongside a linear timeline of Russian expansion into the Far East as it marks Russian national space as already Buddhist, despite the Soviet government’s destruction of Buddhist temples and monuments in the 1930s.

At the periphery of the inauguration ritual a different chronotope emerges, one where the history of Buryatia is presented through collective sacrifice during World War II and the Buryat community’s reorganization into a collective farm. This Soviet chronotope tells a history of the Buryats emerging from the hardship of war to become successful Soviet citizens. Alongside posters commemorating Buryat soldiers who fought in the war, documents display production statistics of the local collective farm to demonstrate a progressive march toward a would-be socialist utopia. The Soviet chronotope does not necessarily present a new vision of the past for those in attendance at the inauguration. Rather, it verifies and reproduces a familiar chronotope based on scientific fact, one that contrasts with the scientifically inexplicable preservation of Etigelov’s body. The juxtaposition of Buddhist and Soviet chronotopes reinforce, rather than
undermine, each other. The Soviet project, and its suppression of Buddhism becomes a necessary condition for the re-emergence of a Buryat Buddhism in the present.

A shamanic chronotope also arises at the inauguration that embeds Etigelov’s stupa in local time and space, connecting Buddhist and Soviet chronotopes to a vision of Etigelov as a place spirit. Etigelov’s stupa stands outside the Buddhist and Soviet chronotopes as a monument to a powerful local deity protecting the residents of Buryatia and whose veneration supersedes ethnic and religious identification. In the shamanic chronotope, Etigelov’s status as reincarnate and the prospects for his return become irrelevant – Etigelov will not return because he is already always present in the form of a place spirit. The propitiation of Etigelov as place spirit creates a relationship where local Buryat communities ensure prosperity through engagement with an ever-present past.

Chapters two and three discuss civic rituals. Chapter two follows the celebration of Victory Day (*Den' pobydy*), marking Soviet victory in the World War II. For some, the political rhetoric of Victory Day contextualizes a history of Buryats becoming successful Soviet citizens through their contributions to the war effort. For others, it is an occasion to critique the linear narrative of Soviet progress and modernity by highlighting the significant losses suffered by the Buryats during this period. In chapter three, the celebration of City Day (*Den' goroda*) presents Buryatia as a hospitable land welcoming different ethnic groups into the territory through a spirit of local hospitality, ethnic tolerance, and national coexistence. The hospitality genre dissolves the strict demarcation of Russian and Buryat lands, reducing the room available for narratives of Russian colonization.

The remaining three chapters of the book focus on religious rituals. Chapter four documents the Maidari festival, which celebrates the eventual return of the future Maitreya Buddha. Etigelov again features as a central character in this ritual where residents participate in order to “lighten” their soul through contact with Etigelov’s body. Here, Buryat Buddhism and Soviet scientific discourses are rendered compatible. The instability and failure of Soviet medico-scientific institutions to provide healing necessitate a turn to religion, and the efficacy of religion, in the form of Etigelov’s body, is demonstrated through the failure of scientific evidentiary regimes to explain Etigelov’s body, reinforcing his miraculous powers. Chapters five and six focus on shamanic rituals in the context of the opening of a new shamanic center and the initiation ritual of a novice shaman. The shamanic chronotope that emerges through this ritual draws on pre-national

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visions of the Buryat community constructed through kinship obligation. Here, the past is always present as Buryats interact with their ancestors through shamanic ritual. As misfortune and suffering ebb and flow, the authenticity of interaction with the past, and the knowledge produced therein, is measured in the relief visited upon present-day Buryat bodies.

_Buddhists, Shamans, and Soviets_ makes a significant contribution to the study of ritual, religion, and history-making. Quijada’s clever and deliberate organization of the book, as well as her clear, confident prose, challenges the reader to rethink some of the common practices of anthropological analysis. The first challenge emerges through the absence of an account of Buryatia’s historical context, precisely because doing so would reify a single version of Buryat history to the detriment of the multiple historical genres Quijada attends to. The book’s second challenge lies in considering Buryatia as a spatio-temporal ethnographic site, without isolating it from its post-Soviet and global contexts. In doing so, Quijada deftly maneuvers through a common pitfall in post-Soviet and post-socialist studies that equates the Soviet categorization of nationality with religion, instead using categories of ritual practice that do not reify the already-existing categories of analysis rooted in the Soviet project.

_Buddhists, Shamans, and Soviets_ speaks to a multi-disciplinary audience and demands the attention of anthropologists, religionists, historians, and scholars working in post-Soviet/post-socialist contexts. Quijada must be commended for her clear articulation of a complex argument as well as her novel contribution to the study of ritual practice. Hopefully, like the reincarnate body of Etigelov, Quijada will appear again in the future with an equally ambitious and innovative monograph.