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Reading this book could forever change the way we look at the history of the Buryat Buddhist community and its functioning under the rule of the Russian Empire. In this groundbreaking book, Tsyrempilov offers a new perspective on the relationship between the Buryat Buddhist community and the Russian imperial authorities. Over the last few decades, researchers have focused on the relationship between Russian imperial power and followers of “foreign faiths”—that is, the non-Orthodox religions from Catholicism and Lutheranism to Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. Notably, research on Russian Muslims has driven Russian imperiology studies. However, little research on Buddhism and Russian imperiology exists. Tsyrempilov brings to light the common discussion among historians of non-Orthodox faiths in the Russian Empire. His observation that the Buryat Buddhist community was a transborder community has led to comparative studies of Buddhist institutions and regulations in the Qing Empire.

First, Tsyrempilov traces the historiography of the Buryat Buddhist communities in a balanced manner: he appropriately evaluates the academic achievements of Soviet researchers within their ideological restrictions but warns of the ideological tendency in some recent Buryat studies to uncritically praise and cater to Buddhist monks.

The Transbaikal region, where the Buryats live, has always been in the “frontier zone,” adjacent to the parts of the Qing Empire that were major bases of Tibetan Buddhism (Mongolia and Tibet) (p. 43). In Chapter One, Tsyrempilov discusses the first contacts between the Buryat Buddhist community and the Russian authorities in the eighteenth century. He uses the Buddhist policies of the Qing Empire and the Russian Empire’s policies toward religious minorities as references. Because of the lack of historical sources, we do not know how the Buryat Buddhist monks viewed the Christian empire. However, we do know that the Russian Empire attempted to monitor and control the Buryat Buddhist community, to isolate them from the neighboring Buddhist empire, and to introduce to them a religious administration structure like that of the Orthodox Church.

In Chapter Two, Tsyrempilov analyzes certain actions that the Russian Empire took in the first half of the nineteenth century to regulate the religious administration of the Buryat Buddhist community. In Chapter Three, Tsyrempilov discusses the improvements in and completion of a legal system to govern followers of Buddhism in Eastern Siberia, the shift in the Russian government’s foreign policy toward East Asia, and the religious policies toward Buddhism, which took place in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. In these two chapters, he accurately analyzes the complex differences in the thinking among the three main political actors: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (an ally of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice), the Siberian local provincial authorities (which followed the guidance of the Russian Orthodox Church), and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (specifically the Governorate-General of Eastern Siberia). Disagreements among these actors stemmed from their attitudes toward the problem of excessively long borderlands, complex international relations, and trade with the Qing Empire. The disputed were the transborder mobility of the Buryat Buddhists, like making pilgrimages to sacred places outside Russia; the Buryat monks’ interest in trade with the Qing Empire; and the question

concerning whether the relationship with the Buddhists outside the Empire was to be a risk or a possibility for the Imperial development.

Tsyrempilov confirms Russia's reference to the Qing Empire in the legal regulations of Buddhist administrative institutions, including the legal code "The Regulations on Lamaist Clergy in Eastern Siberia," published in 1853. This situation was similar to the relationship between Russian Muslims and the Ottoman Empire. It is noteworthy that the regulations were not developed unilaterally and were not imposed in their entirety by Russian authorities. Intriguingly, the Buryat Buddhist community made suggestions to the Russian government to aid their efforts to govern the community. The *Zasak-lama* institution through which the Qing Empire would politically control Tibetan Buddhist monks is one example.

The discussion in Chapter Four centers on the factors that led to the mutual understanding between the Buryat Buddhist community and the Russian authorities. Tsyrempilov focuses on the Buddhist terminology *upāya*, which is derived from Sanskrit (pp. 203–204) and means a skillful strategy to fit the situation in order to gain enlightenment. In this case, it was a strategy to approach power. The *upāya* of the Buryat monks was to be more flexible toward and compliant with the Russian government's rulemaking process. Because this strategy could be applied to any Buddhist community under state order, it has led to comparative studies on Imperial Buddhist policies.

There is a methodological shortcoming in this otherwise excellent work. It lacks a comparison with the Kalmyk Buddhist community on the northwestern steppes of the Caspian Sea. Such a comparison could provide a comprehensive understanding of Russian policies toward Buddhist followers and the religious dynamics across the Russian and Qing empires, the two great Eurasian powers. However, this small omission in the book only demonstrates the great possibilities of discussions on Russian "foreign faiths" in the future.

This book not only adds the topic of Buddhism to Russian imperiology but also helps us to understand the relationship between Russian imperial power and the non-Orthodox indigenous people. The appendix is informative and provides readers with valued primary historical resources on Buddhist legal regulations in Eastern Siberia.

I hope that this outstanding book is translated into English soon so that it reaches a wider audience beyond just Russian specialists.

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