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Book Review: Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia. By Adeeb Khalid. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.

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***Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia.* By Adeb Khalid. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007. xii, 241 pp. \ \$60.00 (cloth); \ \$22.95 (paper).**

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community (p. 83). Another element of “multivocality” Diemberger finds is the tension between the personal, human elements of Chokyi Dronma’s narrative representation and the idealized elements presenting her as a divine Buddhist exemplar. From this tension, Diemberger finds both a moving account of one woman’s life and an important source for the later ritualization of Chokyi Dronma’s persona as an incarnation of Dorje Phagmo.

Another strong point of *When a Woman Becomes a Religious Dynasty* is the way in which Diemberger analyzes the Tibetan phenomenon of reincarnation, demonstrating its significance as a familial and lineal transmission system and articulating the political circumstances that were crucial to the success of the Dorje Phagmo reincarnation lineage. She traces these political factors from those relating to royal patronage and lineage succession in Chokyi Dronma’s era to the dramatically changed circumstances of the current twelfth Dorje Phagmo incarnation, whose administrative role in the Chinese Communist government as a member of the China People’s Political Consulting Conference has earned her a controversial status inside and outside Tibet.

Though surrounded by meticulously researched and deeply insightful historical, social, and literary analysis, the true gem of Diemberger’s work is her nearly 100-page translation of Chokyi Dronma’s biography. If you can’t assign the entire book to your undergraduate students, I would highly recommend assigning Diemberger’s translation of Chokyi Dronma’s biography as an excellent primary source reading for any course covering Buddhist biography, women in Buddhism, or Tibetan religion and history.

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Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia. By ADEEB KHALID. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007. xii, 241 pp. \$60.00 (cloth); \$22.95 (paper).
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In this volume, historian Adeb Khalid presents an overview of Islam’s changing relationship to the state in Central Asia, from the time of Russian colonization (nineteenth century) through the post-Soviet period. The question that animates this book is whether Central Asian Islam presents a political danger to states or to wider interests. The author’s answer is no. Khalid rejects essentialisms that posit Islam as a font of terrorism, but more specifically, he argues that due to Soviet repression of Islam’s formal institutions in Central Asia, Islam became a locus of cultural identity, unconnected to intellectual trends elsewhere that established Islamism as a political effort to create Islamic states.

Khalid introduces the reader to the major intellectual currents among Muslims in Central Asia before 1917, noting the important divide between modernizers (Jadids) and traditionalists. In discussing the Soviet period, Khalid

focuses the Soviet destruction of Muslim religious institutions. In spite of Communist antireligious efforts, the private practice of Islam continued because Islam is not fully dependent on formal institutions. Khalid writes, “Central Asian Islam, cut off from its own past and from Muslims outside the Soviet Union, became a local form of being rather than part of a global phenomenon” (p. 83). During the Cold War, Western scholars, inspired by denunciations of Muslim religious activity published in Soviet newspapers, drew overblown conclusions about Islam’s vitality as an underground religion and even hoped that subversive Islam would destroy the Soviet Union. The Communist Party’s relaxation of its antireligious policies during the perestroika/glasnost period of the late 1980s allowed ordinary Central Asians to renew their interest in Islamic practice, but Islam did not turn out to be a subversive force.

After the demise of the Soviet Union and state support of atheism, the newly independent states of Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—drew on Islam as a source of identity but also sought to control expressions of Islam. Khalid’s depiction of post-Soviet Islam is strongly focused on the interaction between religion and the state in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In Tajikistan, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) became one of the groups vying for political influence against the former Communists, leading to civil war in 1992. Tajikistan’s civil war, and renewed civil war in Afghanistan in 1992, created a fear of instability in neighboring republics. In Uzbekistan, the government responded to the nascent opposition by gradually reestablishing a state control over Islam that seems even more thorough than it was under communism. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was formed by Uzbeks who called for Islamization, who gained war experience by fighting on behalf of the IRP in Tajikistan, and who, after the resolution of the civil war in 1997, went to Afghanistan and joined up with violent Islamist groups. Khalid divides political movements such as the IRP and IMU from other new movements for Islamization of society in Central Asia, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Jamiyat-i Tabligh, which seek the transformation of the state through personal preaching but not through direct political action.

There were bombings in Uzbekistan in 1999, 2001, and 2004; Khalid regards the government response to terrorism as extreme. Uzbekistan’s extremism in repressing political Islam was seen most clearly in the Andijon massacre (May 2005). The government of Uzbekistan prosecutes, jails, and tortures thousands of men accused of belonging to Islamist groups. Strict laws prevent religious gatherings by unregistered groups, local authorities engage in surveillance of religious activity in their communities and report “excesses,” and communities are encouraged to denounce dissenters. Islam can be practiced and taught, but only within government approved limits. Khalid argues that dissenting expressions of Islam become politicized in direct correspondence to Uzbekistan’s repressive conditions and are not strongly linked with outside forces or wider jihadist trends.

Students and nonexperts will find this book a clearly written introduction. One of the volume’s shortcomings is that there is scant attention to Islam in post-

Soviet Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where the state has been far less repressive. Religious studies scholars may note that the author's interest in ordinary practice or doctrinal change is limited. Attention to gendered practices is also brief, marring the book's conclusion. Khalid asserts that Uzbekistan suppresses all non-official expressions of Islam, even private gatherings. This ignores substantial scholarly publishing about women's religious circles in Uzbekistan and thus misses the insight that the gendered perceptions of state actors define whose Islam is political and subject to repression.

These caveats notwithstanding, this work fulfills its goals: demonstrating that there are multiple voices within Islam in Central Asia and that state efforts to control, manipulate, and channel those voices have repeatedly led to very negative outcomes.

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The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia. By DAVID SNEATH. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. xi, 273 pp. \$50.00 (cloth).

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This is a polemical and thought-provoking work that seeks to recalibrate what the author presents as misguided assumptions regarding the internal structure and dynamics of Inner Asian society. Based on his fieldwork in Mongolia, David Sneath concludes that “nothing like the popular image of kinship had existed in Mongolia” (p. 1). Moreover, the conceptualizations of “tribe” and “clan” that prevailed in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship, with its emphasis on egalitarian “segmentary kinship” groups (p. 156), were premised on “colonial-era notions of tribalism.” Weighted with the “pejorative, colonial baggage” associated with the word “tribe” (p. 52), they produced a skewed vision of the history of the peoples of the steppe, requiring outside catalysts (neighboring sedentary states) to bring kinship-based “timeless ... nomadic, tribal society” (p. 3) to statehood. Kinship, clan, and tribe (disputed conceptual categories in modern anthropological literature and not without problems for historians; see p. 64) are set aside. Rather, Sneath suggests, it was “aristocratic power and statelike processes of administration” that proved to be “the more significant features of the wider organization of life on the steppe” (p. 1). These “aristocratic orders,” through “a configuration of statelike power formed by the horizontal relation between power holders” (p. 2), produced a “headless state,” that is, a polity without a central ruler, capital city, and so on (chapter 7), but functioning as a state. Sneath has restored the role of the aristocracy, so often, in his view, swept aside in an imagined unstratified, egalitarian nomadic society (pp. 73–74).