

Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Note on transliteration	11
Introduction	13
Theoretical considerations on the problem of social order	15
Questions and claims	21
Methodology of data collection	23
Guest researchers in Buryatia	24
Researcher “at home” and the Buryat social order	29
Summary	34
1. The cultures of knowledge in Buryatia	36
1.1. The emergence of “Asia” and “Siberia” in European intellectual thought	37
1.2. Producing colonial knowledge about Siberia	43
1.3. Russian tradition of Oriental Studies	46
1.4. Buryat epistemic culture	49
1.5. Buryat attitude to the Western culture of knowledge	54
1.6. Soviet replacement of the traditional culture of knowledge	59
Summary	63
2. The history of social structures and their conceptions	65
2.1. The critique of the kinship society notion	65
2.2. A brief historical introduction: Buryat “clans” and their leaders before and after incorporation into the Russian state	71

2.3. The “tribal” vocabulary in selected Buryat sources	78
2.4. Focusing on the fieldwork area	80
2.4.1. “Clan” and “tribes” of Khori Buryats	80
2.4.2. Soviet state and the traditional ideas of social order . . .	87
2.4.3. The uses of genealogies: Creating and contesting Buryat identity	98
Summary	110
3. The human being in the flow of the vital forces	112
3.1. Kinship “materialities”	113
3.2. The relatedness of vital forces	115
3.3. The ideas of vital force	120
3.4. The hierarchy of vitality: Some practices of maintaining the relatedness	131
3.5. The order of vitality distribution	138
3.5.1. <i>Yosun</i> – the social order of vitality distribution	138
3.5.2. The universal order and the universal bonds	140
3.5.3. The individual engagement with the order	146
3.5.4. The human agency in the orders	152
3.6. The relation of individual and society	156
Summary	161
4. The social and cosmic orders	163
4.1. The relation between the social sphere and the non-social environment	164
4.2. <i>Yosun</i> as the order of a non-transcendental universe	171
4.3. Heuristic context of understanding the order: Selected aspects of Buryat-Mongolian social thought	176
4.4. The harmony of duality	183
4.5. On the way to defining the social sphere	189
4.6. Multiple orders of the universe	192
4.6.1. Ritual and dogma versus order and method	192
4.6.2. <i>Yosun</i> and the political order	201
Summary	205

5. The disturbed order: Categories of traditional culture and challenges of assimilative processes	207
5.1. The Buryat order and the problem of its continuity	207
5.2. The procedures of negotiating the <i>yosun</i> order	210
5.3. Language in the order	216
5.4. Inside and outside the order	223
5.5. The loss of the order and the decline of vitality	226
5.6. The restoration of vital forces – reconsidering the minority position	230
5.7. Problems of contemporary Buryat identity	237
Summary	240
Conclusion	241
Bibliography	248
Index of names	264
List of illustrations	267
Photographs	269