The Uses of the Myth
William T. Cavanaugh

in The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict

This chapter shows the purposes to which the myth of religious violence is put in the United States. In domestic politics, it has helped to marginalize certain practices such as public school prayer and aid to parochial schools. At the same time, it has helped to reinforce patriotic adherence to the nation-state as that which saves us from our other, more divisive identities. The chapter illustrates this process by showing the use of the myth of religious violence in the Supreme Court’s Establishment Clause decisions. In foreign policy, the myth helps to reinforce and justify Western attitudes, policies, and military actions toward the non-Western world, especially Muslims, whose primary point of difference with the West is said to be their stubborn refusal to tame religious passions in the public sphere. The chapter shows this use in academic (Bernard Lewis), government (Bush Doctrine), and journalistic (Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris) sources.

A Response to Daniel A. Madigan
Zayn Kassam

in Catholicism and Interreligious Dialogue

This chapter presents two Muslim scholars’ comments on the discussion in Chapter 2. The chapter underscores how colonialism in general, and more specifically American foreign policy, such as that under President George W. Bush concerning the Middle East, has rendered dialogue more
difficult. It also notes that genuine dialogue need not end in agreement, but that genuine disagreements can be as important as agreements. The chapter admits that theological dialogue for Muslims is difficult, mainly because few Muslims have studied seriously Christian doctrine. The chapter then focuses on some of the best-known texts of the Qur’an that support interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism. Despite these difficult times between Islam and the West, it places great hope in the recent document, A Common Word between Us, issued by Muslim religious leaders around the world.

Ordering Society through Confucian Rituals
Mihwa Choi

in Death Rituals and Politics in Northern Song China
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Sima Guang, leader of the faction advocating enhancement of bureaucratic power, authored a Confucian family ritual manual. He believed in the moral reformation of society through the dissemination of Confucian ritual norms and maintained that rituals were the locus in which the hierarchical social order could be manifested according to official rank. He especially objected to lavish burials performed by wealthy people in the belief that such burials implied a social imaginary of the wealthy where status could be improved by material investments in ritual performance. Sima Guang’s conception of ritual testifies to his vision of society or social imaginary in which official ranks are the fundamental basis of social hierarchy.

Soviet Selves
Justine Buck Quijada

in Buddhists, Shamans, and Soviets: Rituals of History in Post-Soviet Buryatia
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Chapter 2 presents the Soviet chronotope embodied in Victory Day celebrations. Victory Day, which is the celebration of the Soviet victory over Germany in World War II, presumes the familiar Soviet genre of history, in which the Soviet Union brought civilization to Buryatia, and Buryats achieved full citizenship in the Soviet utopian dream through
their collective sacrifice during the war. The ritual does not narrate Soviet history. Instead, through Soviet and wartime imagery, and the parade form, the public holiday evokes this genre in symbolic form, enabling local residents to read their own narratives of the past into the imagery. This space for interpretation enables both validation as well as critique of the Soviet experience in Buryatia. Although not everyone in Buryatia agrees on how to evaluate this history, this genre is the taken-for-granted backdrop against which other religious actors define their narratives.

**City Day**

Justine Buck Quijada

in Buddhists, Shamans, and Soviets: Rituals of History in Post-Soviet Buryatia

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Item type: chapter

City Day is a public celebration of the anniversary of Ulan-Ude’s founding. The public holiday, with a parade and speeches, indexes a chronotope and genre of history labeled the hospitality genre. This genre tells the history of Buryatia as a series of arrivals, beginning with the Buryats, followed by the Cossacks and Old Believer Orthodox Christians (Semeiskie). Both Cossacks and Old Believer Orthodox are Russian and yet not Russian, produced as local ethnic groups in opposition to the central Russian state, thereby transforming what might be a story of Russian colonization into a history of successive migrations. This genre produces a local history of multi-ethnic coexistence and toleration that contrasts the peaceful and multi-ethnic local with the national, and produces Buryatia as a place where many ethnicities have always, and will continue, to live together in peace and neighborly conviviality.