



# **The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices (Studies on the History of Society and Culture)**

*Oleg Kharkhordin*

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Oleg Kharkhordin has constructed a compelling, subtle, and complex genealogy of the Soviet individual that is as much about Michel Foucault as it is about Russia. Examining the period from the Russian Revolution to the fall of Gorbachev, Kharkhordin demonstrates that Party rituals—which forced each Communist to reflect intensely and repeatedly on his or her "self," an entirely novel experience for many of them—had their antecedents in the Orthodox Christian practices of doing penance in the public gaze. Individualization in Soviet Russia occurred through the intensification of these public penitential practices rather than the private confessional practices that are characteristic of Western Christianity. He also finds that objectification of the individual in Russia relied on practices of mutual surveillance among peers, rather than on the hierarchical surveillance of subordinates by superiors that characterized the West. The implications of this book expand well beyond its brilliant analysis of the connection between Bolshevism and Eastern Orthodoxy to shed light on many questions about the nature of Russian society and culture.

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