The Fruit of Devotion:
Islam and Modernity in Kyrgyzstan

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Dedicated to
Ruth J. Anderson

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Zusammenfassung

Die Frucht der Frömmigkeit: Islam und Modernität im postsowjetischen Kirgistan

Der Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion 1991 stellte, zumindest in der westlichen Welt, für viele einen ‚Sieg' der Demokratie dar. Statt den Niedergang zu begrüßen, versuchten viele zentralasiatische Republiken die Zerschlagung der Sowjetunion – welche ihnen zu relativem Reichtum und Stabilität verholfen hatte – zu verhindern. Unfähig den Wandel zu stoppen und konfrontiert mit dem Zerfall von wirtschaftlichen und politischen Strukturen, der zu erbärmlicher Armut für große Teile der Bevölkerung führte, nahmen die meisten zentralasiatischen Regierungen ausländische Hilfsangebote in Form von Demokratisierung und Marktreformen an, wenn auch in unterschiedlichem Maße. Diese Geschichte ist wohlbekannt, wie auch die Tatsache, dass politische und wirtschaftliche Reformen eine gleichzeitige Verbreitung westlicher Ideologien mit sich brachten, darunter Gewissensfreiheit. In Kirgistan war die schnelle Aufnahme der Gewissensfreiheit in die Verfassung des neuen Nationalstaates und in verschiedene Gesetze wahrscheinlich einer der einfachsten und von der Bevölkerung meist gefeierten Schritte auf dem Weg zur ‚Demokratisierung'. Obwohl die sowjetischen Anti-Religionskampagnen dramatische Auswirkungen auf die religiöse Landschaft der Region hatten, gab die Bevölkerung ihre muslimische Zugehörigkeit nie auf. Die ersten Jahre der postsowjetischen Ära waren von einer starken Zunahme religiöser Observanz unter großen Teilen der Bevölkerung gezeichnet.

Die Zahl der praktizierenden Muslimen war im ersten Jahrzehnt nach der Wende starken Schwankungen unterworfen. Jedoch blieb die Religionsfreiheit in Kirgistan einer der populärsten Aspekte der neuen postsowjetischen Periode, auch als gegen Ende der 1990er Jahre sich eine allgemeine Enttäuschung über die ‚Demokratie' sowie den ‚Übergang zum Kapitalismus' im Alltagsleben breit machte. Schließlich wurde jedoch auch diese Freiheit allmählich infrage gestellt. Nach der Jahrtausendwende wurde auch eine langsame, aber dauerhafte Wende zum Islam Hanafischer Provenienz deutlich. Vielen wurde klar, dass die Religion mehr als nur eine Frage des privaten Bekenntnisses war. Religiöse Individuen (im Folgenden im Anschluss an Robert Hefner ‚neue Fromme' 〔newly pious〕 genannt), ihre Sensibilitäten, Glaubenssätze, Handlungen und die Institutionen, die sie gründeten, nahmen langsam Einfluss auf das lokale politische und soziale Leben.

Die vorliegende Dissertation untersucht, basierend auf einer 14-monatigen Feldforschung, die religiöse Landschaft einer kirgisischen Kleinstadt, fokussierend auf die Rolle, die die neuen frommen Muslime in der (Re-)Konstruktion der lokalen sozialen und politischen Ordnung nach mehr als einem Jahrzehnt des Postsozialismus spielen. Zur Zeit der Feldforschung bestand die Bevölkerung Bazaar-Korgons, einer Kleinstadt nahe der usbekischen Grenze, aus usbekischen Bauern (80%) und kirgisischen Angestellten (20%). Die neuen Frommen stammten überwiegend aus der usbekischen Gemeinde, obwohl, wie ich in Kapitel 2 argumentiere, dies eher aus deren sozioökonomischer Lage während des Sozialismus und der damit einhergehenden Integration in die sowjetischen Strukturen resultiert als aus etwas, das ihrer Ethnizität ‚inhärent' wäre.

Diese Gruppe von Muslimen entwickelte in den frühen postsozialistischen Jahren mehrere Cluster religiöser Institutionen zur Bildung und Missionierung (Moscheen, Koranschulen und Studiengruppen), die jedoch vorerst wenig Einfluss auf das institutionelle Leben der Gemeinde als Ganzes nahmen. Die wichtigste dieser Institutionen – *davat* - war sowohl eine lokale missionarische Bestrebung mit dem Ziel, Bewohner der Region näher an den Islam heranzuführen als auch heimische islamische Bildung mit dem gleichen Ziel. Während die häuslichen Studiengruppen von den neuen Frommen besucht wurden oder von denjenigen die bereits ‚Interesse am Islam haben' (*dinge bulup kaluu*), waren die missionarischen Bestrebungen an die Muslime gerichtet, die sich nicht schon kanonischen Interpretationen des Islams zugeneigt hatten (Kapitel 3). Nach 2000 begann die gefühlte Präsenz des Islams das soziale und politische Leben der Stadt deutlicher zu beeinflussen, sowohl innerhalb als auch außerhalb der religiösen Gemeinde. Der selbstbewusste religiöse Glaube und Handlungen der neuen Frommen forderten die Vorstellungen vom Muslimischsein (Muslimness), die die späte Sowjetzeit und frühe Ära der Unabhängigkeit dominierten, heraus.

Die sowjetischen Antireligionskampagnen der 1920er und 1930er Jahre waren erfolgreich darin gewesen, als ‚Religion' bezeichnete Institutionen und Praktiken, die als konstituierend für ‚Religion' angesehen wurden, wie zum Beispiel häusliche islamische Erziehung, Verschleierung, regelmäßiges gemeinschaftliches Beten, das Netzwerk religiöser Autoritäten und Kenntnisse des Schriftislams als rückständig und extremistisch zu brandmarken und zu eliminieren. Auf andere aus lokaler Sicht gleichwohl ‚muslimische' Aspekte des zentralasiatischen Lebens wie zum Beispiel häusliche Rituale und Ereignisse innerhalb des Lebenszyklus, welche von den Sowjets aber nicht als ‚Religion' verstanden wurden, wurde jedoch nicht abgezielt. Korrektes muslimisches Verhalten und religiöse Observanz drehten sich somit während der Sowjetzeit um genau diese, von staatlicher Seite nicht verfolgten, erlaubten Aspekte. Diese Facetten muslimischen Lebens und islamischer Identität, die um den Haushalt kreisten, stimmten mit den

Eckpfeilern nationaler Identität überein, welche von der sowjetischen Nationalitätenpolitik dieser Zeit geprägt worden waren. Die Gleichzeitigkeit beider Bewegungen bedeutete, dass die Aspekte des Lebens, welche in lokalen Definitionen von Muslimentum (Muslimness) elementare Bedeutung besaßen, zudem auch als Indikatoren für Usbekentum oder Kirgisentum angesehen wurden. Zum Ende der Sowjetzeit war nationale Identität eng mit Muslimentum verbunden, jedoch einem Muslimentum, dem ein großer Teil seiner ‚religiösen' Inhalte genommen worden war und das somit sowjetischen Idealen und einer politischen Kultur des Säkularismus angepasst werden konnte.

In den frühen 2000er Jahren begründete eine wachsende Anzahl 'neuer frommer' Muslime eine Vision von Muslimentum – als eine inhärente und fast exklusiv religiöse Identität - die sich konträr zu den Konzeptionen von Muslimentum in der Sowjetzeit positionierte. Unter den neuartigsten Foren zur Artikulierung dieser Vision befanden sich ‚neue Hochzeiten' (Kapitel 4). Die Feierlichkeiten, welche diese Zeremonien begleiteten wurden abgewandelt, um sie moralisch akzeptabel zu gestalten und um eine Plattform für Predigten zu schaffen, die explizit sowjetische Vorstellungen von Muslimentum kritisierten. Darüber hinaus untergrub die Transformation dieses lokal als ‚kulturell' wahrgenommenen Ereignisses in ein erklärtermaßen ‚religiöses' Ereignis die Vorstellungen von Gemeinschaft.

Die religiösen Observanzen, körperliche Gestaltung sowie die Diskurse der neuen Frommen, die nunmehr in der Öffentlichkeit sichtbar und hörbar waren, deuteten für viele Menschen der Kleinstadt Bazaar-Korgon auf die Erosion des säkularen öffentlichen Lebens hin. Die Handlungen und Diskurse der neuen Frommen wurden zudem von vielen Mitgliedern der Gemeinschaft als kongruent mit der Art von Glauben und Handlungen angesehen, die man religiösen Extremisten in regionalen Diskursen über ‚Wahhabis' zuschrieb. Die geopolitische Lage in den 2000er Jahren mit dem von den USA geführten ‚Globalen Krieg gegen den Terror' und der Druck, den westliche Regierungen auf Kirgistan ausübten, seinen Teil zu diesem Kampf beizusteuern, verfestigten die negativen Diskurse über die ‚Wahhabis' und verstärkten die empfundene Notwendigkeit, religiöses Verhalten und religiöse Lehre zu überwachen und zu kontrollieren. Die Diskussion über die ‚Wahhabis' war jedoch nicht nur ein nationaler Diskurs, der dazu dienen sollte, die Subalternen zu kontrollieren. Die angewandte Rhetorik wurde auch von lokalen Akteuren in kleineren Machtkämpfen benutzt, die letztendlich wenig mit ‚Terrorismus' zu tun hatten (Kapitel 3). Die dialektische Weiterentwicklung und Nutzung dieses Diskurses durch lokale, regionale, nationale und internationale Akteure verstärkten seine Relevanz als interpretatives Schema. Dieses Umfeld führte dazu, dass die Debatten über Religion politisch geführt wurden, obwohl die neuen Frommen keinerlei politische Visionen oder Agenden

artikuliert hatten. Während Analytiker Zentralasiens annahmen, dass das postsozialistische religiöse Wiederaufleben von außen politisiert und radikalisiert wurde, waren die neuen Frommen bewusst noch frommer und konservativer bei der Praktizierung von Hauptrichtungen des Islam der Hanafi *Madhab* geworden, und dies geschah weitgehend unter der Anleitung von lokalen Ulama, welche in der Sowjetzeit ausgebildet worden waren. Die Lebensgeschichte von Tajideen Satvoldiev, die im dritten Kapitel beschrieben wird, zeigt sowohl die Verbindungen zwischen dem postsozialistischen Ulama und seinem sowjetischen Vorgänger als auch die diversen Richtungen, in denen der Diskurs über die ‚Wahhabis' zur Gestaltung der religiösen und nichtreligiösen Landschaften eingesetzt wurde.

Diese Sicht auf die angebliche ‚radikale' Natur des religiösen Wiederauflebens und seine Bedrohung für Frieden und Stabilität wurde von ausländischen Beobachtern, inländischen und ausländischen Regierungsbeamten sowie Gemeindemitgliedern geteilt. Eine teilweise Erklärung für diese Übereinstimmung kann man durch die Interpretation der religiösen Landschaft der Region mittels der Kategorie der multiplen Modernitäten finden. Durch die Untersuchung von Langzeitauswirkungen von weit verbreiteten modernen Meta-Narrativen zu Religion und Modernität, westlich orientalistischen Diskursen über den Islam und die Besonderheiten der sowjetischen Modernität wird die Obsession von der ‚terroristischen Bedrohung' etwas verständlicher.

In Kirgistan hat sich diese Obsession weitgehend auf der Ebene des Diskurses ausgedrückt, während in Usbekistan die Rhetorik des Anti-Terrorismus benutzt wurde, um die Gefangennahme und Tötung unschuldiger Bürger durch staatliche Kräfte zu rechtfertigen. Kirgisische Bürger gelten unter den Zentralasiaten als privilegiert, weil sie den wahrscheinlich höchsten Grad an Freiheit in Bezug auf religiöse Überzeugungen, Ausdruck und Organisation genießen. Eher offene Politiken und Praktiken erlaubten dem öffentlichen Islam eine konstruktive Rolle in der Gesellschaft zu übernehmen –und dies nicht nur für die neuen Frommen. Trotz der Hemmnisse, welche globale, nationale und lokale Diskurse über islamischen Extremismus der Entwicklung des öffentlichen Islams entgegensetzen, wurden in Bazaar-Korgon vorsichtige Schritte zur Herausbildung muslimischer Öffentlichkeiten unternommen. Religiös motiviertes soziales Engagement (Kapitel 5), tatsächliche und imaginäre Kontakte zu Muslimen von außerhalb der Region (Kapitel 5 und 6) und die Reartikulation von wichtigen Normen in der religiös textuierten Sprache (Kapitel 7) kündigen ihr Aufkommen an. Dies zeigt auch, dass die neuen Frommen, obwohl säkulare politische Akteure bis in die Gegenwart hinein die dominante Rolle bei der Gestaltung lokaler Vorstellungen und Programme der Modernität gespielt haben, alternative Visionen und Vorstellungen anbieten können, die den Status Quo herausfordern. Die Versuche

der Frauen, Glauben, Mode und Modernität durch neue Arten der Verschleierung in Einklang zu bringen, sind wichtige Schritte in diese Richtung (Kapitel 6 und 7). Bauprojekte für Moscheen, die sich gleichzeitig an religiösen Erfordernissen orientieren und auf den infrastrukturellen Kollaps der sozialistischen Moderne ansprechen, bieten nicht nur Ideen, sondern auch Verwirklichungen religiös textuierter Modernität (Kapitel 3 und 5).

Die letzten eineinhalb Jahrzehnte waren eine Zeit extremen Wandels für die Einwohner von Bazaar-Korgon. Sie müssen nicht nur mit einer neuen Art politischer Ökonomie und einem radikal reduzierten Lebensstandard zu Recht kommen, sondern zudem so fundamentale Konzepte wie Religion und Modernität neu überdenken. Vorstellungen von Modernität aus der Sowjetzeit konkurrieren mit denen von Mitarbeitern westlicher Hilfsorganisationen, christlichen und muslimischen Missionaren, neuen Frommen sowie türkischen und chinesischen Unternehmerinnen und Unternehmern. Die Einwohner Bazaar-Korgons charakterisieren ihre jüngste (Sowjet-) Vergangenheit als modern gewesene und interpretieren den Niedergang der ökonomischen Verhältnisse und die Auflösung staatlicher Institutionen, den sie schmerzhaft empfinden, als Bewegung weg von Modernität. Gleichzeitig setzen sie sich aber auch mit verschiedenen Vorstellungen von Modernität, die von außen an die Gemeinschaft herangetragen werden, auseinander, und müssen darüber hinaus mit einer Vielzahl verschiedener Ideen von innen in Dialog treten (Kapitel 7). In der vorliegenden Dissertation argumentiere ich, dass man diese Beziehung zur Modernität weder als Rückwärtsbewegung noch als Vorwärtsbewegung bezeichnen kann, es sei denn man beschränkt sich auf eine Diskussion der Lebensbedingungen. Wenn man Modernität als „Geschichte kontinuierlicher Konstitution und Rekonstitution einer Vielzahl kultureller Programme“ (Shmuel Eisenstadt) betrachtet, dann müssen wir dies als eine Zeit großer Umbrüche betrachten, in der vormals weit verbreitete und feste Vorstellungen von Modernität (relativ stabile, durch die Besonderheiten der Sowjetunion begründete Vorstellungen) massiv erschüttert worden sind und nun durch eine Vielfalt ‚neuer' alternativer Visionen herausgefordert werden. Die gegenwärtige Debatte in der Gemeinschaft kann somit als Versuch interpretiert werden, orthodoxe Ideen wiedereinzusetzen, welche zu einer Periode relativer – wenngleich nicht unangefochtener – Stabilität führen werden. Dieser Zyklus ist kennzeichnend für Modernität. Es bleibt abzuwarten, ob und wie die Kirgisen im Allgemeinen und die Einwohner von Bazaar-Korgon im Besonderen in der Lage sein werden, den Islam mit ihrer Modernität zu verbinden. Gegenwärtig ist noch nicht abzusehen, auf welche Art und Weise dieser öffentliche Islam, der in der Geschichte der Region eine relativ neue Erscheinung darstellt, die Konturen dieses neuen kulturellen und politischen Programms der Moderne ausgestalten wird.

Preface and Acknowledgements

The title of this dissertation – the Fruit of Devotion – was inspired by an Uzbek proverb “No one throws stones at a tree that doesn’t bear fruit” and the woman who shared the phrase with me, Mukadas Kadirova. Mukadas, the main figure in chapter seven, used this proverb as a source of comfort to deal with the rude comments, gossip, and stares she encountered in public after she began wearing the hijab. The harsh criticism (i.e. the stones), Mukadas reckoned, was an indicator that she was bearing the fruit of obedience to Allah. I adapted the phrase for the title because it seemed particularly illustrative of some of the trends I observed in my research on Islam in a small Kyrgyzstani town. Since the beginning of the post-Soviet period, the number of people adapting scripture-oriented interpretations of Islam grew significantly. These adherents – hereafter “the newly pious” – by and large adopted these interpretations because they felt that it was the duty of every Muslim in obedience to Allah to participate in a set of rituals and practices and to approve of certain discourses. They performed these acts and used theses phrases out of devotion.

The fruit of their devotion has been twofold. They have begun reinstating religion in public spaces and have constructed new forms of religiously inspired public life. The second “fruit” has however been bitter. If the devotion of the newly pious has meant the creation of religious public space, this very act has engendered negative reactions in the community. The newly pious have been stereotyped as religious extremists. The fruit, in this way, has been tension in the community and the politicization of their religious life. This dissertation outlines these two results of the newly pious’ religious turn.

It seems appropriate then that I start by acknowledging and thanking all the townspeople of Bazaar-Korgon who assisted me in my research – whether by submitting to interviews, allowing me to observe their weddings, or befriending me. I owe much to their patience, kindness, and friendship. In particular I would like to thank the Turdabaevs, long-term friends who have become family. Special gratitude is due to my host family – the Turgunovs – who not only assisted me with my research in everyway, but cared for and loved my family making the stay beautiful and comfortable for us all. Thank you to Shahista, Nargeeza, Farida, Saida, Elmira, Abid, Eliza, and Aisulu all of whom, in various capacities, assisted me with my research. The project would have been impossible without Camille Joldoshova, who cared for my children with love, patience, and skill and never tired of my funny requests and expectations.

Several institutions enabled this dissertation – the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology provided funding for the research and writing-up of this project and the Eurasia Program of the Social Science Research Council funded the final year of dissertation write-up. I also benefited from a one-year association with the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World.

The majority of my dissertation was written, however, at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology where the staff – the library, IT, administrative, and research coordination - created an efficient, friendly, and warm environment in which to work. To Anke Meyer and Berit Westwood, the secretariat of department II, thanks for coordinating nearly every aspect of my (non) academic life in Halle. The academic environment of the MPI was rich, challenging, and full of opportunities. I would like to thank all the members – regular and intermittent – of the 2004-2005 Ph.D. writing-up seminar for their insightful comments. The seminars and the critical comments of the participants shaped this dissertation and me as an academic. I am grateful to my "unofficial" supervisor Lale Yalçin-Heckmann, whose insightful remarks appeared like clock work every six weeks in the margins of my papers! I also benefited from a seminar organized at the Martin Luther University. I wish to thank all the participants but especially Richard Rottenburg whose perceptive comments helped me to gain insight on key theoretical issues. Finally I would like to thank Chris Hann who as director of the institute and head of department nurtured a stimulating and rich academic community; as a supervisor he provided a rigorous program that challenged me at every turn. This dissertation has benefited greatly from his insight and guidance.

Dissertations are supported by more than academic connections. My family – Debbie, Jessica, Christina, Kathy, Simone, Remko, and Lucas – and especially three dear friends – Mark Genszler, Lois Thorpe, and Erin Stowell – supported and constantly spurred me on. Willy and Toon Pelkmans, my parents-in-law, were tireless babysitters – no matter if I needed work or rest! I wish to thank them for their encouragement through this very long process and for their genuine interest in my work. My parents have always supported my interests and desires, assisted me through trying circumstances, and cautioned me to keep perspective and balance in life. My completion of this dissertation is as much a result of their life-long parenting work as it is of my own academic endeavor. My beautiful, intelligent, hilarious daughters have provided reality and relief when the dissertation threatened to overwhelm me. In my last month of work they contributed more directly to the fruition of this project. Demonstrating the awakening senses of selflessness that comes with turning five and seven, they learned to let me sleep in when I worked far too late at night! To my husband, Mathijs Pelkmans, who provides wholeness in my rather

fragmented world, you are my best critic and friend. Finally to my dear Grandmother, Ruth Anderson, to whom this dissertation is dedicated: When I was a child and was asked who my hero was I never had an answer. Maybe it's because I never knew what I wanted to be when I grew up. I have an answer now – you.

Notes on Transliteration and Translation

I have used the American Library of Congress System for the transliteration of Russian, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek words. Certain terms – such as *Namaz* or *Noruz* – are cognates in Kyrgyz and Uzbek usually with slight differences in vowel pronunciation (e.g. *Namaz* versus *Namoz*, *Noruz* versus *Navruz*). Since to switch from one language to the other throughout the text would create more confusion than clarity, and since my literacy in Kyrgyz is higher, I have chosen to use the Kyrgyz words throughout for simplicity.

40°
50°
60°
70°
80°
90°
N
55°
50°
45°
40°
35°
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
Astana
KAZAKSTAN
UZBEKISTAN
Bishkek
KYRGYZSTAN
Bazaar Korgon
Jalal-Abad
Osh
Andijan
Tashkent
TURKMENISTAN
Ashgabat
TAJIKISTAN
CHINA
international border
national capital
research site
lake, sea
settlement (mentioned in the text)
cartography: Jutta Turner
base map: Encarta Interactive Worldatlas 2000, modified

Chapter 1

Introduction

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 it signaled, for many in the West at least, the "triumph" of democracy. Rather than applauding its demise, Central Asian governments attempted to forestall the dissolution of the Union which had, relatively speaking, made them quite prosperous. Unable to stop the change and confronted with the breakdown of political and economic life, whose effects included abject poverty for huge portions of the population, most of the Central Asian governments accepted financial and technological aid geared towards democratization and market reforms, though to differing degrees. This story is already well known, as is the fact that these political and economic reforms meant a concomitant spread of Western ideology, including freedom of conscience. In Kyrgyzstan freedom of conscience, quickly enshrined in the constitution of the new nation-state and embodied in various laws (Anderson 2003), may have been one of the easiest and most celebrated steps Kyrgyzstani citizens took on the path toward "democratization". Though the anti-religious campaigns of the Soviet period dramatically altered the religious landscapes of the region, inhabitants never gave up their affiliation as Muslims. The early post-Soviet period showed a sharp increase in religious observance by large portions of the population.

The numbers of those keeping Islamic observances fluctuated throughout the decade. However, in the late 1990s freedom of religion remained one of the most popular aspects of the post-Soviet period in Kyrgyzstan, even while disappointment with "democratization" and the "transition to capitalism" had already become a normal part of everyday life (Boehm 1999; Pelkmans 2005). Eventually, this celebrated freedom was too called into question. Following the turn of the millennium, the effects of a slower, more lasting turn towards mainstream Hanafi religious belief and observance became apparent. Many realized that religion had turned out to be more than a matter of private conscience. Religious individuals, their sensibilities, beliefs, actions, and the institutions they formed began to impact on the construction of local social and political life.

This dissertation examines the religious landscape of a small Kyrgyzstani town, focusing on the role "newly pious" Muslims played in the (re)construction of the local social and political

order more than a decade after the end of socialism.[1] In the early post-Soviet period, this segment of Muslims developed several clusters of religious institutions (e.g. mosques, madrasas, and study groups), all primarily focused on education and proselytization.[2] Initially this trend had very little impact on the institutional life of the community as a whole. After 2000 both within the religious community and outside of it however, the felt presence of Islam began more substantially to influence social life, and hence political, life of the town. The self-consciously religious beliefs and acts of the newly pious challenged dominant late-Soviet and early-independence era conceptions of Muslimness as primarily an ethno-national marker. They asserted a vision of Muslimness as an inherently and almost exclusively religious identity. The religious observances, bodily fashioning, and discourses of the newly pious, now visible and audible in public spaces, indicated for many in the town of Bazaar-Korgon, the erosion of secular public life. Moreover, their actions and discourses were perceived of by other community members as congruent with the kinds of beliefs and practices attributed to religious extremists in regional discourses about Wahhabis. The geo-political environment of the 2000s – with the US led "Global War on Terror"–and the pressure Western nations put on Kyrgyzstan to do its part in this "War", fortified negative discourses about Wahhabis and heightened the perceived need to monitor and control religious behavior and teachings. This environment ensured that debates about religion became de facto political. This dissertation analyzes the religious lives of the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon as intertwined with political and religious processes in multiple spatiotemporal nodes, demonstrating the production of an environment in which the religious beliefs and actions of pious individuals, who self-consciously had neither articulated nor been inclined toward a political agenda, became imbued with tremendous political significance.

The Setting

Bazaar-Korgon is administratively classified as a village, despite the fact that approximately 30,000 people inhabit the community. There are few paved roads. Most inhabitants do not having running water in their homes. There are only a handful of businesses, employing no more than 30 people on average, with the exception of an ice-cream company that employs 100. Despite this, it

1 I take the term 'newly pious' from Hefner (2005:21).

2 Locally known as 'davat'; more internationally as 'da'wa'

is the capital of the *raion.*[3] Paid work is scarce in the community. The vast majority of residents is either employed in the state sector (education, health-care, and government offices), works in the bazaar, or engages in agricultural work. Following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, the land of the two collective farms in the community was divided up among the inhabitants. Nearly everyone received a piece of land, located just outside town, which today provides supplemental income either through the sale of harvests, or the rent and/or sale of the land. Moreover, the majority of people have small bits of land at their residences where they grow fruit and vegetables for household consumption.

The older part of the town, at least according to local oral history, dates back over two hundred years. Few families living there today can trace their lineage back to the early days of the community. Those who can however, still claim to know which cities in contemporary Uzbekistan their families left in order to found, and settle in, Bazaar-Korgon. The community is approximately 80% Uzbek and 20% Kyrgyz. In terms of trading, social networks, and "cultural linkages" the community has long looked to the urban centers of the south and west – contemporary Uzbekistan, or Uzbek dominated regions of Kyrgyzstan – rather than to the mountains of the north and east. This remained true after state boundaries were drawn in the early 20th century and the town of Bazaar-Korgon became part of the Kyrgyz SSR. Ties with Uzbekistan remained strong throughout the Soviet and early post-Soviet periods partly because of a highly porous border. The situation only changed in 1999 when Islam Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan, sealed the border following an assassination attempt by unknown assailants. The growing influence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), including their kidnappings of foreigners on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border and their desire to topple the Karimov regime, aggravated by what Uzbekistan saw as weak Kyrgyzstani state actions regarding anti-terrorism and border patrol, provided further impetus for Karimov to seal the border (Megoran 2002) . After this trading and social networks became more difficult to maintain.

Bazaar-Korgon is 30 kilometers east of the Uzbek border, twenty kilometers west of its' *oblast* capital, Jalal-Abad, and just off the main highway which connects Bishkek and Osh, Kyrgyzstan's number one and two cities respectively. While the town of Bazaar-Korgon is predominately Uzbek, Bazaar-Korgon *Raion* is inversely dominated by Kyrgyz. The ethnic makeup of the *raion* reflects the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ratio of the country. Very few members of other ethnic groups reside in the district. Most notably, there are no Russians; they left after the

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3 Despite its classification as a village (aiyl) I elect to call Bazaar-Korgon a town because of its size, the size of its population, and its function as a center of economic and bureaucratic activity. Moreover, in 2003 procedures were set in motion to have it administratively re-classified as a small town (shaarchi) or town (shaar).

collapse of the USSR. The Kyrgyz Republic–referred to in everyday parlance as Kyrgyzstan– has a total population of 5.2 million, of which 65.7 % are Kyrgyz, 13.9 % are Uzbeks, and 11.7 % are Russians (*Kyrgyzstan Entsiklopediia* 2001: 90 - 91). The majority of the Kyrgyzstani population (approximately 80%) are Sunni Muslim and predominantly of the Hanafi Madhab.

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country which is bordered by China to the east, Tajikistan to the south, Uzbekistan to the west, and Kazakhstan to the north. It was one of the five Soviet Central Asian Republics until the dissolution of the union in 1991. Its land mass is 198,500 square kilometers, of which over 90% is mountainous with only 6.5 percent arable land (*ibid:* 18). The majority of this arable land is in the south, below the Tien Shan Mountain range (Kyrgyz: *Tengir Toolory*) in the Kyrgyzstani portion of the Ferghana Valley. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan meet in this densely populated region.

The Ferghana Valley has been the site of major sedentary populations of Central Asia since antiquity. Contemporary Uzbeks assert the most forceful claim as primary descendants of these populations despite the long-standing heterogeneity of the regions peoples. Prior to Soviet modernization campaigns of the early 20th century, which included massive forced population settlement, the contemporary Kyrgyz population was nomadic. During the Russian Imperialist period and the Soviet era, large numbers of Russians settled in Kyrgyzstan. Following the collapse of the union, most fled. Only a handful of what once was a significant (approximately ten %) Slavic population in Bazaar-Korgon from the 1970s to the early 1990s remained at the time of research. There are two official languages in Kyrgyzstan – Kyrgyz and Russian. Uzbek is not an official language, though it is the language of instruction used by many schools of Southern Kyrgyzstan. In Bazaar-Korgon, for example, four out of seven schools use Uzbek as a language of instruction and follow the curriculum used in Uzbekistan, though with the addition of courses in Kyrgyz language and the history of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz of the north often note the heavy influence of the Uzbek language on the Kyrgyz spoke by southerners.

Ethno-national identity is an important issue in Kyrgyzstan, not least because of the sizable Uzbek population. During the Osh Riots of 1990, 120 Uzbeks and 50 Kyrgyz were slaughtered during three days of ethnic violence sparked by land disputes, the uneven distribution of power, and high levels of unemployment (Tishkov1995: 134). These events led many foreign observers to believe that, with the collapse of the USSR, ethnic violence would become widespread – especially in the Ferghana Valley with its variegated ethnic makeup, its densely populated land, and its water-related issues. Politicians were not the only ones who concentrated on ethnic issues. Academic studies of ethnicity in the region also bloomed (e.g. Schoberlein-Engel 1994, Olcott

1995, Tabyshalieva 1999, Lubin and Rubin 1999). However despite these fears, there has been no further ethnic violence since the tragic events of 1990.

In the first decade following the collapse of the USSR, Uzbekistan seemed to prosper while Kyrgyzstan lay in misery. This led many Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan to look longingly towards Uzbekistan. For many Karimov typified the strong leader Central Asians thought they needed to pull them through the difficulties of the early post-Soviet period. The early economic success of Uzbekistan confirmed this idea. Yet by the turn of the millennium the situation had been nearly reversed. Many Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan began to perceive the Karimov administration as increasingly authoritarian. Moreover, they expressed satisfaction with the freedom they enjoyed in Kyrgyzstan to grow, sell, or manufacture what and when they wanted, in contrast to the centrally controlled Uzbek economy. They saw Uzbeks across the border experience a sharp decrease in living standards as well as a curtailment of freedoms, including freedom of expression and conscience. The Andijan Massacre of 2005, where several hundred people were slaughtered by the Karimov government, confirmed what locals knew and human rights organizations had feared – the authoritarian regime would use any means to maintain its control including torture, kidnapping, arrest, and mass killings (Human Rights Watch 2005; International Crisis Organization 2005;). Many of those who fled the 2005 massacre landed in Bazaar-Korgon *Raion*.

For many Uzbeks at the turn of the millennium, Kyrgyzstan was a place of relative freedom. Those I spoke with in Bazaar-Korgon celebrated the independence they had which their friends, families and business partners in Uzbekistan did not. Yet when compared to Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks often felt less than equal, despite full citizenship and equal rights guaranteed by law (Khamidov 2002). Uzbeks and Kyrgyz were in agreement, however, concerning Kyrgyzstan's poor economic growth and the rampant corruption of politics and business. In March 2005, one and a half years after concluding my fieldwork, the so-called Tulip Revolution took place, ousting President Askar Akaev who had been in office since 1991. While many hoped the revolution would signal a changing political and economic environment, at the time of writing the cronyism and corruption of the former regime seem to persist and economic conditions remain bleak (Shershen 2007).

The advent of policies and laws which guaranteed freedoms of speech, assembly, and conscience was related to the economic hardships of the early post-Soviet years. Lacking raw materials and access to markets on which to build a new economy, Kyrgyzstani government officials adopted the radical structural adjustment programs proposed by the IMF and the Worldbank in an attempt to garner massive international aid (Anderson 2003, Boehm 1999). The political reforms they instituted included freedom of religion. Beginning in 1991 Kyrgyzstan

adopted a series of laws to guarantee these religious rights, culminating in their inclusion in the 1993 constitution (Anderson 2003). The early post-Soviet period showed a dramatic upsurge in certain forms of religious participation – e.g. the construction of mosques, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and participation in the Ramadan fast. Unfortunately the economic restructuring did not bring about the hoped for sustainable growth and material prosperity. And while many celebrated the new religious freedom, a large influx of Christian missionaries and a rise in the practice of certain canonical interpretations of Islam left the government and portions of the population less than satisfied with this side of post-Soviet restructuring.

Economic conditions link up with the creation of contemporary religious landscapes in another way. Bleak economic prospects and massive dissatisfaction with the economic and political state of the nation provide at least part of the impetus for the urban poor to take an interest in Islamist movements like Hizb ut-Tahrir (ICG 2003, Khamidov 2002, Ilkhamov 2001). The urban poor in the South of the country, where these movements are most prominent, are largely Uzbek youth who, because of their minority status, often feel even more alienated from political and economic opportunities than their Kyrgyz age cohorts. However, the membership of these groups is very limited (ICG 2003, McBrien and Pelkmans forthcoming 2008). Most ordinary people turn to scripture-oriented interpretations of Islam without having grand political motivations or agendas. Rather, they are enticed by these interpretations because they are a means of dealing with social and economic dislocations.

In Kyrgyzstan attempts at political change have not taken a religious tone. The unfolding of the 2005 “Tulip” revolution is instructive in this regard. Reports about the demonstrations and marches that culminated in the toppling of the Akaev regime did not make a single reference to religious symbolism or motivations. Despite these observations and the fact that actual participation in politically motivated Islamist movements remains small, if not insignificant, political and scholarly discourse remain occupied with “ a growing Islamist threat” (Baran, et. al. 2006, Karagiannis 2006, Naumkin 2005). It seems that a rather paranoid and ungrounded fear of religiously inspired violent political action has captured the imaginations of politicians, scholars, and residents of the Ferghana Valley – Bazaar-Korgon included. While the Uzbek regime has utilized the discourse of anti-terrorism to (violently) consolidate its power and eliminate any opposition (Fumagalli 2006), Kyrgyzstani government officials and elites have used the discourse more as a means of demarcating acceptable and unacceptable interpretations of Islam. While

some individuals have been arrested on the grounds of alleged Islamic extremism, they have all been released relatively quickly and no allegations of torture have arisen.[4]

The Kyrgyzstani government has walked a fine line in its policies and actions regarding religious freedom and anti-terrorism. The government has allowed a massive influx of Christian missionaries as a part of its democratic stances. At the same time, the government has been pushed, discursively and in practice, by the Russian, U.S., Uzbek, and Chinese governments to take a much tougher line in combating terrorism. These foreign powers tend to view the rather weak Kyrgyzstani government and its so-called lax policies and procedures regarding anti-terrorism as creating a perfect breeding ground for fundamentalism. Using various means of persuasion – for example Uzbekistan's withholding of natural resources, not to mention the massive numbers of carrots and sticks the U.S. can brandish in the country – they continue to push the Kyrgyzstani state to further restrict and regulate the practice of Islam.

Theoretical Background

Islam in Central Asia

Soviet ethnographic writings on Islam in Central Asia were burdened by heavy agendas. Seeking to demonstrate the death of backward traditions and the triumph of Soviet modernity, or attempting to motivate new campaigns and modernizing programs in light of the "persistence of tradition", these writings were heavily ideologically slanted (Kandiyoti 1996: 530, 535). Because of the closure of the region to foreign scholars, Western analysts were forced to pilfer data from these Soviet sources as the basis for their own writings. In an insightful essay, Mark Saroyan argued that Western scholarship on Islam drew on Soviet literature in two ways, through direct and indirect extrapolation (1997: 11). In the first, according to Saroyan, Western scholars mined Soviet writings for "factual" ethnographic data, while ignoring the ideological bases which underlay research methods, as well as modes of analysis and presentation (Saroyan1997: 11 - 13). These works were in many ways no more than reproductions of Soviet scholarship. In the second method, the "facts" of Soviet ethnography were reworked by Western scholars and presented in new discourses that diverged significantly from the original context and intent of the Soviet

4 However, in 2006, an imam in Osh was murdered under suspicious circumstances. Media reports indicate government involvement Radio Free Europe, August 7, 2007. www.rferl.org.

author (1997: 13 - 14). The widespread Western Cold War era belief that underground Sufi brotherhoods, supposedly pervasive throughout Central Asia, were a potential source for unsettling the Soviet regime, derived from indirect extrapolation of Soviet sources. Western writers not only culled "facts" from Soviet sources, but frames of interpretations as well– including the notion of "parallel Islam". According to Saroyan, "The notion of 'parallel Islam' is connected with the conceptual practice of distinguishing two forms of Islam, 'official' and 'unofficial,' whereby 'unofficial,' popular Muslim ritual practices are viewed as separate, 'parallel,' and even hostile to the 'official' Soviet Muslim hierarchy that staffs the clerical administrations and mosques" (1997: 14).

One of the most well known and in-depth Soviet ethnographic studies on the topic, Sergei Poljakov's *Everyday Islam,* exemplifies the binary logics at work in Soviet notions of parallel Islam. Poljakov investigated the persistence of traditionalism in Central Asia, which he defined as "the complete rejection of anything new introduced from the outside into the familiar, 'traditional' way of life" (1992: 4). His study, conducted at the end of the Soviet period, argued for understanding the material as well as the religious and social basis for the continuance of traditional, rural Islamic life in Central Asia. He thus argued for more than ideological campaigns to overcome it. His acknowledgment not only of the persistence of this traditionalism, but the manner in which the Soviet system perpetuated it, set his analysis apart from that of his colleagues (Kandiyoti 1996: 537). His section on "The role of religion in the community" (95 - 112) nonetheless relies on the "official" versus "unofficial" dichotomy, revealing its centrality as a structuring concept for Soviet ethnographic investigations of Muslim religious life in Central Asia. Poljakov contrasts official, government religious institutions, such as registered mosques and the two state approved Islamic institutions of higher learning, with the vastly larger numbers and types of religious institutions at the "disposal" of "Everyday Islam" (95 - 104). His explication of "The Clergy" follows a similar pattern: the official mullahs, lauded as highly educated are contrasted with the unregistered mullahs, an uneducated, unnumbered group who, though not possessing the same degree of authority, nonetheless "are the main foundations of Central Asian Islam" (1992: 107). The unregistered mullahs, Poljakov asserts, though not trained in canonical Islam, are the bearers of "traditional" everyday Islam. "[T]hey [unregistered mullahs] serve Islam very well on the daily level, because they know very well what *their* people need. They preserve *their* Islam, which consists of everything that satisfies *their* society. This Islam stands very successful guard over […] customs" (1992: 107).

Poljakov's work, one of last written before the collapse of the USSR, is exemplary of the type of writings on "parallel Islam" that influenced Western writers. The concept of "parallel

Islam" had entered into the writings of leading Western scholars of the region such as Alexandre Benningsen by the late 1970s (Saroyan 1997: 14). From there it proliferated into the Western literature becoming "one of the discursive objects around which the contemporary Western literature on Soviet Islam has come to revolve" (1997: 14). This is the equivalent in the literature on Central Asia of the classic application by Ernest Gellner of the theory of the Great and Little tradition to Islam in general (Rasanayagam 2006). Gellner argues that in Islam there is a "traditional differentiation" of the religion "into the folk and scholarly variants" in which the later is constantly criticizing and reforming the former in an effort to maintain orthodoxy (1981: 4 - 5). Talal Asad later mounted a convincing critique of Gellner's conceptual framework and put forward alternative analytical grounds for future anthropological research on Islam. Asad argues that anthropologists should investigate Islam as a discursive tradition which is defined as "simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present" (1985: 14) Like Gellner, Asad attaches central importance to questions of orthodoxy in Islamic traditions, arguing that they should likewise be focal points for anthropological investigations of Islam. But Asad offers a definition which deviates from Gellner's understanding of orthodoxy as "a specific set of doctrines 'at the heart of Islam'" (Gellner in Asad1985: 15). Rather, Asad asserts that "orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require or adjust *correct* practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace *incorrect* ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy" (*ibid*).

The idea of a "parallel Islam" has been a primary concept that has long pervaded academic inquires into religious life in Central Asia; the notion that there is a fanatic, backward nature to Islam and that it poses an inherent threat to the stability and development of the region, has been one of the guiding tropes in political writings. At the end of the 19th century Russian authorities held typically imperialist and orientalist notions of the Central Asian Muslim population (Geraci 1997). They were perceived of as undeveloped, waiting for help from imperial Russia. At the same time, Islam was seen as a destabilizing force and was assumed to be fanatical at its heart. "Russia as progress stood in contrast to Central Asia as fanaticism and barbarity, much of which was seen to reside in Islam. 'Fanaticism' came to be seen as the defining characteristic of Central Asians" (Khalid 1998: 51). Russian fears about political subversion and their "abiding prejudice against Muslim religious piety" (Brower 1997: 119) led to a two-pronged campaign against Islam – political, to control a population, and "cultural," to civilize the fanatic other (Khalid 1998: 50 - 52). British conceptions of Islam in the region at the same time were strikingly similar. In 1899 Skrine and Ross noted that "Throughout Islam, indeed, the mullahs are irreconcilable enemies to

Western progress" and they warned that the "wave of sedition" sweeping Central Asia could make its way to India creating vast problems for British rule (quoted in Myer 2002: 11).

Although large discontinuities existed between imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, the orientalized view of Central Asian Muslims was strikingly similar in the late Imperial and early Soviet periods (Northrop 2004). For example, Northrop notes that "[i]n the eyes of these early Bolshevik observers, much of the explanation for these problems lay in the paramount importance of religion in Central Asian life. Primitive, "barbaric" practices could thus be ascribed straightforwardly to Islam" (2004: 40). Moreover, the concomitant need to civilize and modernize the "backward" Muslim populations and to subdue their fanatic nature under political rule was too a part of early Soviet campaigns in Central Asia (Bräker1994; Lorenz 1994, Northrop 2004). Over the course of the Soviet era there were fluctuations in Moscow's perceptions of its Muslim periphery. In 1950s, as Will Myer exerts, Central Asia and its Muslim population were a source of tremendous pride for the Soviet authorities who showcased the area as a model for socialist modernization. The hope of Soviet authorities was that this demonstration of socialist achievements in Muslim societies would win other Muslim populations to the side of the second world in the Cold War. (Myer 2002: 12 - 19). Positive positionings of the region like this were, however, the exception.

During the Cold War era, the idea that Muslim unity could be a destabilizing force similarly pervaded Western academic writings on politics in the region. Myer argues that this notion was rooted in a Western view which saw Central Asia as a Soviet colony. The conclusion drawn was that just as colonial uprisings lead to the collapse of Western European empires, Central Asian Muslims too would rise up to unsettle the USSR (Myer 2002). Links between the Muslim populations of Central Asia and those on the other side of the iron curtain were thought to facilitate such uprisings (Akiner 1993; Myer 2002). Though these predictions about the demise of the Soviet Union turned out to be false, and Central Asians remained the strongest supporters of the USSR as it began to collapse, the threat of Muslim insurrection in the region somehow remained. As Akiner argued "…old suspicions die hard. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 a new fear emerged: that of Central Asia as a key link in a Muslim fundamentalist 'arc of instability'" (quoted in Myer 2002: 236 - 237). More recent U.S. policies and pronouncements in the region – as well as those of the Central Asian governments themselves – that have come as a part of the "war on terror" demonstrate the contemporary saliency of the perceived threat of unity among "radical" Muslims. Equally illustrative of the centrality of this explanatory framework are popular works on the region, such as those produced

by Ahmed Rashid with inflammatory titles like *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* (1994) and *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (2002).

Fortunately, historians specializing in the region who, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, have had access to primary sources, both in written and oral form, have begun to offer alternative interpretive frameworks. Examples of this scholarship include works on: Soviet anti-religious campaigns (Keller) – especially in reference to the unveiling of women and the politics of gender in the early Soviet period (Northrop 2004 and Kamp 2007); late Tsarist Muslim reform movements (Khalid 1998; 2006), the ideological and material underpinnings of Imperial Russian control in Central Asia (Brower 2003), and Soviet era ulama and their scholarship (Babadjanov 2004; Babadjanov and Kamilov. 2001). Other works which deal with the region only partly or tangentially like Brower and Lazzerini's (1997) edited volume *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700 – 1917* or Francine Hirsch's (2005) *Empire of Nations* have contributed to more nuanced views of broad policies, ideologies, and practices of Imperial Russia and later the USSR and the way these have shaped the Central Asian landscape.

While the articles in a 2006 special edition of *Central Asian Survey* titled "Post-Soviet Islam: an anthropological perspective" indicate that a critical, innovative, and productive anthropology of Islam in the region may finally be underway, the majority of works produced until this point, with the exception of the work of Nazif Shahrani (e.g. 1984, 1995), have unfortunately relied on many of the old frameworks found in the European, Russian, Soviet, and American literature of the last century. There have only been two anthropological monographs on Islam in Central Asia published since independence: Bruce Privratsky's *Muslim Turkistan* (2001) and Maria Louw's *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (2007).[5] Privratsky and Louw both focus their attention heavily on the collective creation of Muslimness by exploring the role of domestic rituals, pilgrimage, healing, and sacred sites in the production and negotiation of this concept. Privratsky's aim is to show the way that collective memory not only sustained a sense of Muslimness through the Soviet period (2001: 19 - 22), but also helped Kazaks relate their practices and notions of Muslimness (*musilmanshiliq)* to the locally labeled pure way (*taza jol),* a scripture based Islam they perceived to be lived only by the elders and religious specialists (2001: 75 - 76). Privratsky engages with the Soviet era scholarship and attempts to overcome problematic views which saw the "folk", "popular," or "parallel" Islam of the Kazaks as either shamanistic practices with an Islamic veneer or as innovation-ridden "less-than- real" Islam (2001:10). He seeks to overcome this dichotomized view in two ways. First he shows how the

5 Because a copy of Maria Louw's book was unavailable at the time of writing, I rely on a copy of her dissertation on which the monograph was based.

Kazaks themselves explicitly negotiate the gulf between "great" and "little" traditions. Second, Privratsky himself defends "Kazak Muslimness" against academic attacks which trivialize its claim to validity, asserting that "local versions of 'popular Islam' were once more 'normal' and construed less pejoratively than they are today."(2001: 10). His stance is an admirable anthropological one insofar as he defends the "native's point of view." Unfortunately, in his defense and explication of "Kazak Muslimness," Privratsky ignores the variation within Kazak interpretations of Islam. He also reinforces the categories which he aims to dismantle by so tightly binding his interpretation of Kazak Muslimness to its spatial, temporal, and cultural locality. In short he ignores long-term extra-regional relationships which have shaped the contemporary Kazak religious landscape.

This approach of presenting a bounded, pure, inherently "good" local Islam is common among those who seek to defend Central Asian notions of Islam against the booming literature on Islamic extremism in the region, which is then cast as a foreign import. For example, anthropologists Farideh Heyat and Russell Zanca explicitly label what they perceive as threatening, deviant, or militant Islam in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan respectively, as the direct result of foreign influence. Central Asian Islam, on the other hand, they valorize as inherently peaceful (Zanca 2005) or laudably syncretic (Heyat 2004). In these renderings, Central Asian Muslims become passive receptors of foreign influence.

Louw, on the other hand, actively focuses her analysis on the way that Bukharans create and negotiate the concept of Muslimness in order to deal with a traumatic post-Socialist environment. In this way she takes a more processual notion of Muslimness which avoids some of the pitfalls of other anthropological approaches. Nonetheless she, like Zanca and Heyat, divides the Muslim population into "Islamists" on one side and those who practice a rather non-canonical, non-intellectual, Islam on the other:

> [I]t is equally important to point out, a fact perhaps lost in the discussion of radical Islam in the region, that even though they perceived post-independence society as a mixed blessing, the majority of Muslims in the country do not see the diverse Islamist movements as a serious alternative […] What they [Bukharans] articulated in their search for the Divine was not an interest in an abstract orthodox worldview or a utopian world order. Rather, they adopted down-to-earth strategies for regaining agency and a sense of social belonging and attempted to rebuild the shattered moral foundations of their lives." (2006: 320)

While I agree with Louw's assertion that religious changes are motivated in part by an attempt to make sense of a morally (and also economically and politically) distressing time, it is unhelpful to

dichotomize the religious landscape into Islamists versus everyone else. She characterizes the "everyone else" as not interested in abstract debates about Islam, leaving no room for scripturally oriented Muslims who are not Islamist, or for Muslims who seek to reconstruct society in non-religious terms – not to mention a whole range of other Muslims whose beliefs and practices may align in a variety of ways that fall out of this simplistic categorization.

In light of the overall paucity of research on Islam in Central Asia and the somewhat disappointing anthropology produced on this topic to date, one of the primary aims of this dissertation is ethnographically to map the variety of beliefs, actions, and institutions of a community of Muslims in the Ferghana Valley region of Kyrgyzstan. In doing so like Privratsky, Louw, and Zanca, I confront the specter of Muslim extremism that haunts the literature on Islam in Central Asia. Unlike these authors, however, I do not take its widespread existence as a given. I attempt to unpack the saliency of this trope in the literature, assess its factual basis, and evaluate the influence such discourses of extremism have in the community of study. Moreover, rather than repeating dichotomies of the "bad-extremist" and the "good-local" Muslims, I seek to tease out a whole range of beliefs and practices that are, to varying degrees and in numerous combinations, scripturally-, ritually-, domestically-, and secularly-, oriented visions of Islam. Like Privratsky and Louw, I too explore both individual and communal constructions of Muslimness. However, in a diverging argument, I do not focus on rituals but rather assert that community-wide debates surrounding Muslimness must be seen as motivated, at least in part, by contemporary challenges to Soviet era notions of Muslimness, religion, and public life. A short digression here is important to make this point clear.

In Chapter two I demonstrate how Soviet anti-religious campaigns of the 1920s and 1930 successfully eliminated and branded as backward and extreme a set of institutions and practices understood by those involved in the campaigns to be religion– e.g. home-based Islamic education, veiling, prayer, the network of religious authorities, and knowledge of textual Islam. Other aspects of Central Asian life which were of equal importance in local notions of Muslimness[6]– like the keeping of household rituals and lifecycle events – but which were not understood as religion by Soviet authorities, were not targeted. Over the course of the Soviet period, proper Muslim behaviour and religious observance came to revolve largely around those un-targeted, permitted aspects. These facets of Muslim life and Islamic identity, centered on the home, were congruent with the markers of national identity valorized in Soviet nationalities policies of the same period. The simultaneity of the two campaigns meant that aspects of life which had become

6 i.e. what it means to be a Muslim.

elemental to local definitions of Muslimness were likewise objectified as indicators of Kyrgyzness or Uzbekness (Shahrani 1984). By the end of the Soviet period, national identity was intimately tied to Muslimness, but a Muslimness which had been stripped of much of its "religious"[7] content and could thusly be made compatible with Soviet ideals and a political culture of secularism (Shahrani 1995; Shafir 2000).

In the early 2000's, the category of people (with internal diversity) referred to in other literature as "the newly pious" (Hefner 2005) or "conscious Muslims" (Saktanber 2002) explicitly challenged this Soviet-era conception of Muslimness in their teachings and proselytizing efforts. They implicitly disputed these notions, as well as the related vision of secularized social and political realms, in their religiously-motivated attempts to reconstruct individual and communal life in response to the hardships that followed the collapse of the Union and the rise of the free market and nation-states. I argue that these religiously motivated attempts to rebuild communal life come in the forms Louw described, but equally in what Martin Van Bruinessen has termed canonical interpretation of Islam (van Bruinessen 2004). However, the majority of practitioners of these scripture-based interpretations are far from the Islamist or the extremists imagined by Louw, Zanca, Heyat, and Privratsky.

The individuals who make up the newly pious are not simple products of external Islamist influence but rather are often individuals who have self-consciously become more devout and conservative in their practice of mainstream forms of Islam of the Hanafi *Madhab*, and who have done so largely under the tutelage of local ulama trained during the Soviet period (chapter 3). I thus argue for the interpretation of contemporary religious processes through the lens of recent critical histories of Islam during the Soviet and Russian Imperial periods. In following the path I outlined above, which seeks to historicize current religious processes and interpret contemporary religious landscapes as the product of debate and recognition of a communal tradition, I align myself with Asad who, arguing in reference to the Middle East, asserts that "if one decides to write about the social structures of Muslim societies in terms of overlapping spaces and times, so that the Middle East becomes a focus of convergences (and therefore of many possible histories), then the dual typology of Islam will surely seem less plausible" (1986: 11)

In examining the recent debate over orthodoxy in Bazaar-Korgon I argue for the importance of interpreting current events through critical histories of the region. Equally important to the interpretive work is situating the current events in their wider spatial networks. Contemporary anthropology has too often viewed Central Asian Islam as a bounded entity

7 Here, I mean those aspects of life conceived of as 'religious' by the Soviets, and in fact, by most contemporary Westerners: prayer, fasting, visiting or worshipping at religious sites, and studying religious texts.

unaffected by wider processes – save for the all-powerful influence of Wahhabi currents. Contrary to this perspective, I show the religious landscape to be the result of much more complex past and current connections – both religious and non-religious.

The newly pious of Bazaar-Korgon have made use of what "global flows" trickle into the community – such as media (chapter 6), clothing (chapter seven), normative orders (chapter seven), money (chapter 4), and "fundamentalist" interpretations of Islam (chapters three and five) – appropriating these elements in their individual and collective constructions of Muslimness, their practices of everyday religious life, and the recreation of their society. Of course, their interpretation and use of these flows are constrained, as I will demonstrate. Other Muslims in the community equally interact with similar "global flows" and are confronted with the way these flows have been as well as the way the flows have been utilized, interpreted, and represented by the newly pious. This complex project constructs the local religious landscape. The canonical interpretations cannot be dismissed; we must be cognizant of the way they are being practiced – whether fundamentalist, extremist, or not – and the way these interpretations are debated, incorporated, transformed, and rejected by a variety of Muslims (cf. Marsden 2005).

By explicating a number of examples of these kinds of transnational links I argue for their vital role in shaping precisely what Privratsky referred to as "local Islam" or what, in a perhaps unintentional nod to Poljakov, Louw called "everyday Islam". While these authors portray "local" ways of living Islam as being rather discrete, disconnected traditions, I aver that they cannot be disconnected from spatially wide and temporally long connections with other Muslims, their traditions and beliefs, as well as with non-Muslims, their beliefs, traditions, and importantly, their institutions. I stress that we need to turn the fear of Muslim connectedness on its head. Many of the international connections between Muslims that impact the contemporary religious field of Bazaar-Korgon have been productive – addressing communally recognized problems like lack of financial resources, decreased community solidarity, and unstable ordering concepts–for a wide spectrum of the community. Moreover, I assert that the secular state's use of discourses on Muslim extremism, its attempt to control religious practice, and its failure to cultivate stable, functioning economic and political systems must equally be considered when analyzing the prospects for peace and stability in the region.

But breaking down these long-term dichotomist organizing frames of interpretation is only the first step. One must ask not only why they persist, but why they permeate the ordering systems of both the foreign academics and the central Asians among whom they conduct research. Asad's assertions that one must consider the role non-religious processes have played in shaping religious landscapes (1985), as well as his discussion on the ordering and disciplining

regimes of the modern state's political project of secularism (2003), are important starting points. So is Saroyan's explanation for why "the diverse Soviet and Western studies [concerning Soviet Islam] read often more like a single discourse than two antagonistic, mutually exclusive discourses" (1997: 17). His answer is that they are based on "a common set of assumptions about religion in contemporary society that have been derived from the classical tradition" especially as it relates to religion and modernity (1997: 18). I assert that it is not only a common tradition of thought among academics: these notions of religion and modernity have penetrated the largest part of the Central Asian population, just as they have the populations of the West. I argue that not only must we recognize Central Asia as modern, as having long been modern, in order to understand its religious landscape, but that we must connect the region to the broader history of modernity in order to enhance our notions of this contentious analytical concept.

Religion and politics

The dissertation starts from the perspective that for the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon, their religious transformation has first and foremost been about their obedience to Allah, their responsibilities as Muslims, their search for help in times of trouble, and their desire to transform themselves into pious individuals. Their turn to Islam has also, however, been a source of collective strength needed to confront the morally and economically troubling environment of the post-Soviet era; and a means of reconnecting with the past and reestablishing their identity as Muslims, an understanding and practice which they feel was stolen from them and corrupted during the Soviet period. As noted the newly pious are a category of people who have not articulated a self-avowed political agenda (cf. Hefner 2005). Yet, their beliefs and actions have produced tensions in the social life of the community which have had political consequences.

The entry of religious beliefs and religiously motivated actions into social life has not only led to a widespread debate over definitions of Islam and Muslimness, it has brought into stark view for Bazaar-Korgonians the contemporary role of religion in social and political life. Bazaar-Korgonians, like individuals and social scientists the world over, have understood the contemporary "resurgence" of religion as a critique of secularism, if not an out-right indicator of its demise. Religion's unexpected return has thus forced re-conceptualizations of modernity and the supposed inevitable end of religion's (public) influence.

If the dampening of the post-modern fervor of the 1980s was a key impetus in re-conceptualizations of modernity beginning in the 1990's, the "religious revivals" of the 1980s were no less important in stirring criticisms of one particular cornerstone of modernization

theory: the secularization thesis. According to Peter Berger "Although the term 'secularization theory' refers to works from the 1950s and 1960s, the key idea of the theory can indeed be traced to the Enlightenment. That idea is simple: Modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and the minds of individuals" (1999: 2). The so-called revitalization of religion in the 1980s, especially, as José Casanova notes, its role in political movements in Iran, Poland, Latin America, and the United States, challenged this thesis because "religion, leaving its assigned place in the private sphere, had thrust itself into the public arena of moral and political contestation" (1994: 3).

Whereas this revival led some theorists, like Berger, to conclude that the secularization thesis was wrong (1999: 2 - 3), Casanova tackled the phenomena of religious return by engaging with oversimplified views of the secularization thesis, such as the one articulated by Berger above. Casanova argued that the secularization thesis, wrongly taken as a single theory, was in fact three propositions – secularization as the structural differentiation of social life, secularization as religious decline, and secularization as the privatization of religious life. Casanova asserts that the defensible core of the secularization thesis is differentiation. He holds the last claim – the notion of privatization of religion – to be untenable. Regarding the second proposition he shows that at least concerning two of the "core" centers of the modern world – America and Europe – there are a variety of experiences and he thus makes no robust claims concerning its veracity. In defending and refining the secularization thesis, Casanova examines what forms of public religions are compatible in the modern world. He asserts that their compatibility is linked to the way in which they become public. Casanova claims that deprivatized religions are compatible with the modern world when their public role is located within civil society, when they accept the "inviolable right to privacy and the sanctity of the principle of freedom of conscience" (1994: 57) and when they act in the public sphere through rational discussion and debate but not by coercion.

Asad, while applauding Casanova's overall endeavor, nevertheless criticized the manner in which he assessed religion's compatibility with modernity. According to Asad the flaw in Casanova's theory is akin to the classical flaw critics of Habermas found in his thesis of the public sphere, namely that the public sphere is by nature exclusionary (2003: 183 - 184). There are limitations on who may participate, but also what can be discussed and how, by virtue of the nation-state's hegemony over ideas and symbols. These limitations in turn affect how religion can participate in the public sphere, putting it in a position, Asad argues, where it is forced to "disrupt existing assumptions to be heard" (2003: 185).

Asad sees the nation-state as endlessly monitoring and redrawing the boundaries between religion and the secular in order to maintain its legitimacy which is based on a coherent division. He concludes that in a world so utterly controlled and regulated by the nation-state, religion's attempts to deal with, for example, social conditions will be automatically seen as political. Rather than acknowledging the role the nation-state played in making these acts political or looking at the real agendas of religious actors, secularists interpret the motives of these actions as evidence of religion invading the secular. Asad's conclusion is that in the end, the secularization thesis is no longer convincing "because the categories of 'politics' and 'religion' turn out to implicate each other more profoundly than we thought, a discovery that has accompanied our growing understanding of the powers of the modern nation-state"(2003: 200).

While Asad's criticism of Casanova is pointed and his own genealogy of the secular extremely insightful, the absolute power he ascribes to the nation-state may be overstated. As Armando Salvatore argues, whereas Casanova's conception of the contemporary role of religion in the public sphere may be unduly optimistic, Asad's may be overly pessimistic (Salvatore 2006: 544). Looking specifically at the potential for Islam in European public spheres, Salvatore notes that "Asad has expressed doubts about the possibility that Islamic traditions (therefore also Islamic actors) would be permitted to institute ethics of participation in a secular, and in particular in a European socio-political context due to the institutional rigidities of European secular formations"(2006: 544). He focuses on what he calls the Casanova-Asad debate as part of a larger discussion which traces an alternative genealogy of European secularity, one which "exposes not the necessity of the dualism of religion and politics, or of the private and the public spheres within European secularity, but rather the ambivalence in this dualism and the tension inherent in it, which are so essential to the functioning and legitimacy of the modern European state" (2006: 545). Salvatore's view is insightful because it is a more realistic interpretation of the functioning of European political systems. Moreover, its temperance regarding the power of the state and the possibility of religious actors in public spheres makes for a more balanced theoretical perspective. (cf. Salvatore 2007).

If Salvatore's discussions of Euro-Islamic public spheres are propitious in their attempts to further general theorizing on religion, politics, and modernity, especially for the way they enable us to see the possibilities *and* constraints on collective religious action, his work with Dale Eickelman on Public Islam and the common good reveals the ways these theories concerning Islam and the public sphere travel to contexts outside Europe. In a series of articles and book chapters, Eickelman and Salvatore discuss what they call Muslim Publics and/or Public Islam, notions which attempt to capture the way "highly diverse invocations of Islam as ideas and

practices" are deployed by a wide variety of actors in "civic debates and public life" throughout the world (2006: 98). Though the general framework is applied to a variety of settings, their writings are often divided into issues faced by Muslims in Europe and by those in the Muslim majority world. Concerning Europe, they focus on how Islamic actors, in the minority, contribute to reshaping the secular public sphere for all Europeans – Muslim and non-Muslim alike. In what Salvatore and Eickelman refer to as the Muslim Majority world, the focus is in some ways the inverse, not least because, "In the Muslim majority world … the role of religion in social and community life never receded" (Eickelman and Salvatore 2006: 99).[8] Rather than a transformation of a modern secular public sphere into a religiously textured one, they analyze the processes in the Muslim majority world more as the transformation of a pre- or semi-public sphere into a modern one. By nature of the abiding importance of religion in the Muslim majority world, they assert that this newly evolving public sphere is likewise religiously textured, but in distinctive ways.

The category "Muslim Majority World" can, however, be unpacked even further. The authors are certainly aware of the vast internal differentiation of the Muslim Majority World, and they pay close attention to the variety of experiences of actors in such diverse regions as Indonesia, Turkey, and Morocco. Nevertheless, concerning Central Asia their descriptions and analysis seem less than satisfactory. In fact, Central Asia seems to fall between the categories of "Muslim minority" (Europe) and "Muslim Majority". Central Asia, undoubtedly a Muslim majority area in simple demographic terms, shares a long intertwined history with the Middle East and India and was at one time the seat of Islamic empires. While its colonial experience under the Russian Empire is in many ways akin to the colonial experiences of the Middle East and India, the Soviet Period, with its modernization campaigns, wrought dramatic changes in the Central Asian landscape (religious, political, social, economic, environmental, etc) which radically set it apart from the other regions. It experienced these "modern" changes, especially processes of secularization, much earlier and more dramatically than occurred in many areas of the Muslim majority world.[9] In many ways its current experiences, a result of its Soviet Past and its contemporary encounter with the West – as I will outline in the dissertation – are more analogous to Europe, and perhaps to Turkey.

8 Lest they be misread, a fuller quotation is necessary "In the Muslim majority world, however, the role of religion in social and community life never receded. This does not mean that it did not change and develop in ways often underemphasized by Western observers and by Muslims themselves" (Eickelman and Salvatore 2006:99).

9 See Hefner for an interesting reading of the contemporary resurgence of Islam in the Muslim majority world and its foundations in the 'secular nationalist leaders' and their politics of the mid 20th century (2005:18-25).

Of course, especially in regards to concepts like "public sphere" Central Asia is not easily comparable with Europe. The term civil society had its vogue in the 1990s precisely because its perceived absence in the Soviet Union was exactly one of the problems understood to be in need of correction following the socialist collapse. Stated crudely, one might see Central Asia at the end of the Soviet Period as a uniquely modern region but one that lacked both the public sphere of Europe and the influential role of Islam in social and public life that Eickelman and Salvatore posit for the Muslim Majority World.

Of course this would be a vulgar reading indeed. Chris Hann argued against such narrow interpretations of "civil society" which, on the basis of the state-society dichotomy, bracketed out very real, "specific practices and normative codes through which people are made accountable and responsible to other members of society" because, as in the case of China, they occurred in spaces claimed by the state or, as in Eastern Europe, moral norms and orders of the former socialist states were upheld (1996: 7 - 10, 20 - 21). Hann focuses his analysis on the key term "civil society" partly because at the time of his writing it was not only the fashion in academic circles but also in political projects throughout the former socialist countries. Eickelman and Salvatore employ the phrases "public sphere" or "public space". In the vast literature on all these terms one could find significant parallels, but also important differences and contradictions in the way they are defined and employed. However, the usages of these phrases by Hann, and Eickelman and Salvatore are striking similar and thus warrant closer comparison. Both Hann and Eickelman and Salvatore redefine the terms in order to overcome the narrow conceptions that inhibit their analytical deployment in the socialist or Muslim world. They shared a congruent interest in expanding notions of the public sphere/civil society so that they could be utilized in a wider variety of circumstances outside modern Europe, and they did so by foregrounding collective attempts to shape society in ways that, in Hann's words, is civil or tolerant, or, in Eickelman and Salvatore's formulation, represents the common good.

Eickelman and Salvatore assert that "The public sphere is thus not limited to 'modern' societies. It is the site where contests take place over the definition of the 'common good,' and also of the virtues, obligations, and rights that members of society require for the common good to be realized" (2002: 95). Their definition attempts to refine notions of public space which saw it as either an exclusively modern phenomena and/or one that was incompatible with religion. Hann, on the other hand, arguing for forms of civil society during the socialist era, seeks to overcome the classic political, and political anthropological, state/society binary opposition. In his 1996 re-articulation of the term, Hann asserts that we should understand civil society "to refer more loosely to the moral community, to the problems of accountability, trust and co-operation

that all groups face" (1996: 22). He argued that because the policies of the state and the actions of its agents play a central role in process of establishing trust and cooperation in social life, whether abetting or inhibiting these process, investigations into a newly defined civil society would overcome the binary opposition.

Obviously these definitions have their differences, the main one being Hann's elevation of civility or tolerance, as he refers to it in later writings (see Hann 2007), as the virtue to which societies should aspire. Similar leanings are found in some of Salvatore's other pieces (2006, 2007). Working on the heterogeneous populations of Western Europe, Salvatore has explicitly articulated a reinvigoration of secularism as the best means to deal with the multi-vocal social landscape. Their normative writings correlate because Hann too was engaged with the notion of how to create cohesive, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional societies within a secular nation-state. In contrast to these later writings, the earlier definitions of the public sphere (as articulated by Eickelman and Salvatore in 2002 and by Hann in 1996) leave more room for the virtues, or common goods, to be locally articulated.

To frame the analysis of this dissertation I elect to use the terms "public sphere" and "public space" though with Hann's discussion of civil society equally in mind. I argue that the self-consciously religiously motivated beliefs and actions of the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon, though not avowedly political, have nonetheless had highly political consequences. The most startling impact the beliefs and actions the newly pious have had in the community is their implicit and explicit contestation of Muslimness, a concept (along with other intertwined notions like Islam specifically and religion more generally) that was not open for public debate during the mid-to-late Soviet period. While some of the acts and beliefs of the newly pious are visible and accessible to wide portions of the community and are thusly "public", others are viewed or heard by more restricted portions of the community. Following Eickelman and Salvatore's reading of Dewey, I argue that even those religiously motivated actions, or the articulation and propagation of certain beliefs, that occur in private or semi-private locations become public because of the wider reverberations they have on communal life (Chapter 4). "In drawing attention to the communicative and interconnected aspects of social life that we call the public sphere, Dewey shows how acts become public when their consequences, even if initiated in private, indirectly affect the welfare of many others (Dewey 1927: 13; cited in Eickelman and Salvatore 2004: 16)

Applying these insights to the context of Bazaar-Korgon, I argue that the re-articulations of Muslimness by the newly pious challenged definitions central to individual and collective processes of identification, including the collective imagination of the nation. Moreover, in undermining the supposed tie between ethnic and religious affiliation by asserting that Muslim

was an inherently and exclusively religious category, they undermined local notions of religion and its place in modern social and political life. The newly pious, individually and collectively, sought to address communal issues formerly attended to by state agencies and actors. These acts and beliefs were concomitantly political because they took up the constitution of communal life, the values that underlay it, and the day-to-day maintenance of collective living. In some instances this involved challenging or questioning the authority and role of the state. In these ways, I understand the religious process of Bazaar-Korgon as "Public Islam". Importantly however, incorporating the insights Salvatore provided regarding the Casanova-Asad debate and those made by Hann on the dichotomy of state-society, Public Islam occurs both in reaction to and cooperation with the actors, policies, and foundational concepts of the Kyrgyzstani government.

In this respect Kyrgyzstani citizens are quite privileged among Central Asians because they are afforded perhaps the largest degree of freedom regarding religious belief, expression, and organization. Relatively open policies and practices have allowed Public Islam to play a constructive role in society and not just for the newly pious. Despite the constraints global, national, and local discourses on Islamic extremism place on the development of Public Islam, tentative steps towards the formation of Muslim publics have been taken in Bazaar-Korgon. Religiously motivated social action (chapter 5), actual – or imagined – links with Muslims from outside the region (chapters five and six), and the rearticulation of key norms in religiously textured language (chapter seven) signal their emergence. They also indicate that while secular political actors have played, until now, the dominant role in shaping local conceptions and programs of modernity, the newly pious are offering alternative visions and enactments which challenge the hitherto status quo.

Modernity

I have argued that to properly interpret contemporary Central Asian religious landscapes, the region must be classified as modern, and as having long been modern. In this dissertation, I suggest that the same step must be taken to further clarify concepts of modernity. As I will argue more fully in chapter 5, while anthropologists of the former socialist world have long been engaged in understanding the effects of Socialist and Western programs of modernity on the region, providing sharp analysis worthy of attention, their contribution to wider anthropological theories on the topic have been negligible. This is unfortunate, for the socialist experience confounds certain aspects of contemporary anthropological explications of modernity – such as the equation of modernity with a capitalist identity field or the notion that modernity is always

experienced linearly (chapters five and seven). Moreover, the post-Socialist experiences with global, Western modernity provide material which temper sweeping theories about the affects of globalization. As I argue in chapter seven for example, modernity in Bazaar-Korgon is more than the "images and institutions associated with Western-style progress" (Knauft 2002: 18), it also involves longings for and imaginations of Soviet-style development.

New theories on the religious modern likewise stand to profit from interpretations of the Central Asian landscape. As I have shown, Central Asia falls outside of classifications like Muslim majority or minority society and thus fails to adhere to certain patterns concerning the varying effects of modernity and globalization on these regions. It bears similarities with the experiences in both Europe and the Muslim Majority world. But its unique history means that it has important divergences which explain, for example, how narrow, orientalized media portrayals of Muslims can widen community notions about the variety of Muslim experience (chapter six). For these reasons, among others, I present my material on religious life in Bazaar-Korgon as a compliment to and critique of the 1990s and 2000s anthropological literature on modernity.

Why has modernity become the vogue in recent anthropological and social theory 30 years after its supposed demise? Bruce Knauft posits that, while the fervor of post-modernism had died down by the 1990s and its radical break with modernism was called into question, postmodern sensibilities "were effective in criticizing assumptions of Western thought, the structures of its social and political economy, and its understanding of historical and contemporary 'progress'." (2002: 12). In short, the wax of postmodernism threw into question the institutionalized assumptions of classical modernization theory and the incumbent claims to truth and knowledge of modernity; its wane sparked the question "If the 'post' in postmodernity was excessive, what is a better way to understand 'modernity' to begin with?" (Knauft 2002: 13) Thus, generally bracketing the postmodern turn of the 1970s and 1980s, but indebted to it, most contemporary discussions of modernity place themselves against "modernization theory" or "classical modernization theory" as it arose especially following the end of World War II. Two interesting contours of modernization theory are useful in understanding the contemporary revisiting of the concept. In an early 1990s discussion of modernization and social change, Eisenstadt asserted that post World War II modernization theory diverged from earlier classical studies, such as those by Marx and Weber, through its complete universalizing turn:

> "Instead of stressing the specificity of European civilization and European modernity, these studies assumed that the development of modernity constituted the apogee of the evolutionary potential of mankind and that the kernels of this process are in principle to

> be found in most human societies. Hence they asked questions about which conditions facilitate and which conditions impede the development of such modernization in all human societies. At the same time, however, they took for granted that the European (and perhaps also the American) experience constitutes the major paradigm of such a modern society and civilization" (1992: 421).

Concomitantly, during the 20th century the compounding disciplinary split between social sciences and humanities meant a bifurcated focus on the material side of modernity by the social sciences and the mental, or cultural, side by the humanities. (Knauft 2002: 10). This dual turn towards a universal understanding of modernity with the West as its apogean image and a narrowed interest in economics and politics meant a rather exclusive focus in the social sciences on discovering, charting, and developing the economic and political factors of social change involved in "modernization" as well as the assumption of the universality of these processes. As John Kelly has pointed out, it is no coincidence that this form of modernization theory was in vogue, both as a theory and a model of practice, after World War II when the West, headed by America and through the newly created U.N., set out to "modernize" the former colonial world. (Kelly 2002).

It was against these theories and associated research agendas that the contemporary literature on modernity arose. Many of the new approaches have attempted to reinvigorate a cultural analysis of modernity (Appadurai 1996). Others offered critiques of Western modernization programs and theories, emphasizing the contradictions, failures, and patterns of domination in Western development schemes as well as the ways in which dreams of Western material and cultural progress have become engrained in the rhetoric and practice of daily life (Wedel 2001; Buroway and Verdery 1999; Donham 1999). Most prominent in the critiques was the deconstruction of modernity as a homogenous process. This led to the literature on "alternative modernities" which examined the multitude of locally produced versions, and visions, of modernity which diverged, rivaled, and were coeval with the Western variant (Rofel 1999). However, profuse use of the term in recent literature has unfortunately done little to sharpen analysis. As Donham asserts, "Ironically, to invoke modernity or its aftermath nowadays has itself become a claim to be fresh, to make a new beginning – in other words to be modern" (2002: 241). The term can also be an odd disclaimer of anti-exoticism or non-ethnocentrism. Friedman captures this use of the term by stating that "invoking modernity expresses a kind of politically correct approach to difference. Oh yes, they can be very different – but they are differently modern" (2002: 302). Among the various usages of the word Friedman has discerned

at least four categorical patterns of employment: 1) as contemporary; 2) as the leading sector or region of the world; 3) as a set of products; 4) as a cultural space (2002: 289). Friedman's own usage is the fourth. He asserts that not only are the first three definitions questionable, he contends that the slide from one constellation of meaning to another clouds the author's intent and the analytical leverage of the term. The ambiguous use of the word, combined with the ethnographic push to explore an ever expanding number of alternative versions of modernity, has resulted in a term that is nearly devoid of meaning.

In an effort to counter this and to reinvigorate and focus research on modernity, Friedman suggests that rather than a concept we understand that modernity "is a word that has and does refer to a cluster of phenomena that may or may not be systematically related to one another" (2002: 294). His cluster includes, most prominently, capitalism, the nation-state, democracy, and developmentalism. Friedman's critique of the major deficiencies in theories of alternative modernities is excellent. His explication of the cluster of phenomena to which the word refers, with the accompanying explanations, goes a long way in adding substance to the term and provides a schema that allows for more fruitful anthropological inquires into alternative modernities. Moreover he rightly stresses the need to bring back a political-economy approach to the study of modernity (cf. Donham 2002, Kelly2002). But his analysis takes an unfortunate turn when, at the end of his argument, he refines his definition by giving a two-fold categorization:

1. Modernity as the contemporaneous refers to a situation of integration within the capitalist world economy and to varying degrees within the capitalist world as such.
2. Modernity in the structural sense, as outlined above, refers to the cultural parameters of capitalist experience space.

My objection lies in his equation of modernity with capitalism. As he phrases it, "Modernity is […] the cultural field of commercial capitalism, its emergent identity space" (298). While no one would deny the absolute centrality of the development and expansion of capitalism in the creation of Western European modernity or its dominant role in contemporary life, by equating the two Friedman precludes non-capitalist experiences of modernity. I contend that the cluster of phenomena which map out the core of modernity must be broad enough to include non-capitalist modernities.

Eisenstadt's (2000) proposition of "multiple modernities" not only overcomes the determinism of modernization theory, but provides a broad enough working schema to allow for the Soviet experience as a modern one, as well as other movements, actors, and institutions

potentially excluded from Friedman's analysis. Moreover, his interpretive framework does so without reducing the concept of modernity to a black box. Eisenstadt's asserts that

> The actual developments in modernizing societies have refuted the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of this Western program of modernity. While a general trend toward structural differentiation developed across a wide range of institutions in most of these societies […] the ways in which these arenas were defined and organized varied greatly, in different periods of their development, giving rise to multiple institutional and ideological patterns (2000: 1 - 2).

This initial formulation resonates, at least in part, with some of the alternative modernities literature. But, like Friedman, Eisenstadt goes on to note the importance of the original Western project as a "crucial (and usually ambivalent) reference point" (2000: 2). And like Friedman he argues that, though difficult to identify precisely, there is a common core of modernity. But his list of common characteristics diverges from Friedman's significantly, e.g. by including "a conception of the future characterized by a number of possibilities realizable through autonomous human agency"; intensive reflexivity; "the awareness of a great variety of roles existing beyond narrow, fixed, local, and familial ones"; a reconceptualization of the political which includes protest and its incumbent themes and symbols and which constantly seeks to redraw the boundaries of the political; the contestation and struggle over collective identities; the acknowledgment of different values and rationalities; and "continual contradictions between the basic premises of its [modernity's] cultural and political dimensions and major institutional developments"(2000: 3 - 8).

This list bears little resemblance to that of Friedman's discussed above; most importantly, it does not centralize capitalist integration or the capitalist cultural field as one of the defining features of modernity. While in this article Eisenstadt does not deal with the Soviet Union as a modern state itself, he does argue explicitly that "The socialist and communist movements were fully set within the framework of the cultural program of modernity, and above all within the framework of the Enlightenment and of the major revolutions. Their criticism of the program of modern capitalist society revolved around their concept of the incompleteness of these modern programs" (2000: 11).

In an article published in the same edition of *Daedalus* on the topic of "Multiple Modernities" Johann Arnason gives a much fuller discussion of the Soviet Union as modern, paying attention not only to the ideology and revolutionary movements which inspired the creation of socialist states, but also to the makeup and functioning of these states. Arnason

structures his article around “a threefold context of reference for the notion of modernity” (2000: 62) examining each notion in detail, relating the communist experience and, in each case, demonstrating the modern nature of the communist countries. But perhaps more intriguing is his supposition that the ideology of communism, attempts at its institutionalization, and the actual functioning of communist countries, were all as sustained endeavors to deal one of the inherent conflicts between two cultural premises of modernity – “on the one hand the vision of infinitely expanding rational mastery; on the other hand, the individual and collective aspiration to autonomy and creativity”(*ibid*.: 65). In line with the literature of multiple modernities, Arnason argues that cultural premises of modernity, like the ones indicated above, work themselves out into different institutional arrangements.

Eisenstadt’s framework and Arnason's analysis reveal what most socialist citizens already knew, but many Westerners ignored: they, their society, and their polity were modern (Creed and Wedel 1997). Acknowledging the USSR as modern, enables us to see the contemporary Central Asian religious landscapes as part of a series of particular cultural and political programs of modernity; comparing this particular program with those of the West reveals many similarities with respect to religion, politics, and society. The differences uncovered, in many cases force re-evaluation of the concept of modernity. Eisenstadt argued that one of the hallmarks of religious communities in the last few decades is their move from anti-modernist stances to positions which reject Western hegemony over defining modernity (2000b). Religious individuals and communities now embrace modernity, but a modernity created on their own terms. This argument needs to be adjusted when looking at the situation in Bazaar-Korgon. Here we see a self-proclaimed modern community full of modern citizens who are attempting to embrace locally “new” interpretations of “their religion” and to deal with the impact this has on their individual and collective identity, their society, and their state. Of course the interpretations of Islam they embrace as well as the degree and manner in which they do so vary. But in the end they too are people who are attempting to reconcile religious belief, practice, and identification with “local” notions of modernity.

In his 1999 study of the Zambian Copperbelt Ferguson aimed to simultaneously represent the experiences of his interlocutors – who perceived themselves as having moved away from a modernity they nearly reached, challenge the modernization thesis as an analytical framework, and nonetheless interpret the discourse of modernization as a real social fact which shaped life. He called this an ethnography of decline and aimed to counter-act the influence modernization theories had had on the structures and contents of ethnographies, namely the need to show progress and movement forward within the society one researched. By analyzing what he called a

decline, Ferguson attempted to reverse the flow. I find his assertion less than satisfactory, because he implicitly posits that there is either a way forward or a way back. While obviously the people of the Zambian Copperbelt experienced a real decline in living standards, I'm not sure that labeling his work an ethnography of decline overcomes the penetration of modernization theory in anthropological writings. It still implies a very path oriented, linear move.

While conceptual maps, like societies, cultures, and in some cases governments, are constantly shifting, the last decade and a half has been one of extreme flux for residents of Bazaar-Korgon. Not only are they dealing with a new mode of political-economy and radically reduced living standards, they also need to rethink foundational concepts like religion and modernity. Soviet era notions of modernity compete with those offered by Western aid workers, Christian and Muslim missionaries, newly pious, and Turkish and Chinese business men and women. Bazaar-Korgonians recognize the modernity of their past and they painfully see and feel the loss of economic and structural plenty often associated with modernity. At the same time, they not only interact with the variant notions of modernity coming from outside the community, but must also deal with a multiplicity of ideas from within. It seems to me that we cannot call this relationship to modernity a move forward or a move backward, unless we restrict ourselves to a discussion of living standards. If we are to regard modernity as "a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs" (Eisenstadt 2000: 2) then we must see this as a moment of grand flux in which formerly widespread and somewhat stable (and probably more so in this case due to the particularities of the Soviet Union) notions regarding modernity have been massively upset and a range of visions offered as alternatives. The present communal debate can then be interpreted as an attempt to reinstate orthodox notions, which, while never free from contestation and renegotiation, will at least provide another period of stability. This cycle is emblematic of modernity. It remains to be seen how and if Bazaar-Korgonians in particular, and Kyrgyzstanis in general, or at least various groups within the wider society, are able to reconcile Islam with their modernity. It is not clear from the outset in which ways the new Public Islam, a relative novelty in the modern history of the region,[10] will shape the contours of this new cultural and political program of modernity.

10 The Jadid movement of the late 19th and early 20th Century provides in some respects an important precedent: see Khalid 1998.

Research Methods

The dissertation is based on fourteen months of anthropological fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan in 2003 and 2004. Eleven months were spent in the town of Bazaar-Korgon; three months were in the capital, Bishkek. This period of formal fieldwork was supported by two years of prior residence in Bazaar-Korgon, during which I worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching English in a local secondary school.

Many anthropologists choose their field sites because of long term interests in the region prior to their research. They are often attracted to a particular characteristic of a given area – the natural beauty of a region; fantastic food and dazzling material culture; a peculiar history; or even the excitement and challenge of living in remote, harsh environments. None of these was true for me. My selection of a field site had more to do with chance. I was sent to Kyrgyzstan by Peace Corps in 1998 and I was assigned to the town of Bazaar-Korgon. It was not love at first sight. Though in many ways the community became a home away from home for me, when I first laid eyes on it my reaction was to flee. Bazaar-Korgon was the hottest, ugliest place I had ever seen. The bleakness of the townscape was even greater when one realizes that Kyrgyzstan, a country that is 95% mountainous, has few natural resources save for its peaks and its scenic landscapes which lure seekers of beauty and athletic thrill. Despite my initial adverse reaction to the town, I accepted the assignment to work in Bazaar-Korgon. (To be honest I was given no other choice.)

During my stint as an English teacher I did find a few hidden beautiful spots in Bazaar-Korgon, mostly privately cultivated bits of land on family compounds, hidden behind mud walls. I was invited into these sanctuaries relatively quickly, as everyone was intrigued to meet “the foreigner” in town. Having me as a guest was a boast worthy event in a community where “guesting” and hospitality are not only common pastimes and necessary parts of all lifecycle events, but markers of respectability and rank. But despite the numerous houses I visited and special spots I was shown by my hosts, there was no hidden Shangri-la. As the two years past, my proficiency in Kyrgyz increased, my network of acquaintances and friends broadened and deepened, and I discovered that I was not the only one who reacted so negatively to the town; I learned that it was reputed, by residents and non-residents alike, to be one of the ugliest and least desirable places to live in the country. It was exactly at this moment, when I started to hear these kinds of complaints, that I realized how comfortable Bazaar-Korgon and I had become with one another. I was no longer held hostage by hosts, but allowed to wander private gardens at leisure, and debate the rather routinized stories I was told about the region and its culture. I began to see beyond the unsightliness of the town and into the lives of its inhabitants. In short, I became

friends with people; I even found an adoptive family. It was these people that made my two years beautiful. It was these people who made the town interesting, complex, and alive, and one of the main reasons I chose to return to the area to conduct fieldwork for my Ph.D. Dissertation.

Of course one can not choose a field site simply because one has friends in a given location. However, my social networks and prior residency in the community did give me an advantage in dealing with some of the most difficult methodological issues anthropologists face. When I returned for my research in 2003 I was able to enter the field easily and start my inquiry immediately. Moreover, because I was known to the community, and already respected for the role I played at the school as well as for some of the community projects I initiated, it was not difficult for me to establish the trust an anthropologist needs to conduct in-depth research.

Kyrgyz was never an easy language to learn, not least because there weren't any language manuals created to teach the language to foreigners. During the Russian and Soviet periods, few non-Central Asians made any effort to learn the local Turkic languages. Thus, when I began my study in 1998 the only manual available to me was one produced by Peace Corps a few years prior. But with the patience of my friends and the persistence of my Kyrgyz teachers, to whom I am greatly indebted, I reached relative fluency by the time I left the country in 2000.[11] Therefore, I was able to communicate with residents of the community immediately upon arrival in 2003, including Uzbeks most of whom understand Kyrgyz as well.[12] During my anthropological fieldwork, I also privately studied Uzbek and attained a good degree of proficiency.

During the 11 months I conducted research in the community, I employed four methods of investigation: Participant observation, in-depth interviewing, the collection of life-histories, and surveys. Participant observation, the classical anthropological tool, was my primary method of data collection. In this respects, my two years of prior residency might be indirectly counted as research in that I learned much about daily living in the community. Thus, during my PhD research, I focused my participation and observations more directly on religious life, the specific aim of my project.

While living in Bazaar-Korgon from 1998 - 2000, I had witnessed the final, slow stages of the construction of a large Friday mosque in the center of town. The mosque was designed to be the Friday Mosque for the *raion*. The only other Friday mosque, built in the beginning of the 20th century, had become rather small and, at a ten minute walk from the Bazaar and bus station, seemed a bit peripheral. I was fascinated by why such a large construction project had been

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11 Special thanks to Usubaly-agai, Dilbar-ejeke, and Salima-ejeke.

12 The linguistic proximity of the two languages, the intermingling of the populations, and the inclusion of Kyrgyz language course in Uzbek-language schools, explains this.

undertaken in such a seemingly out-of-the-way, poor town. Bazaar-Korgon had little to commend itself to foreign donors and it seemed to me that the construction of an enormous mosque would not be the financial priority for its impoverished residents. It was on this note – with the aim of finding out why and how the mosque was constructed – that I began my research in 2003. Once I arrived I found out that my instincts that "something was going on" in the town were right. As I met old friends and acquaintances and told of my research on Islam in Bazaar-Korgon, I heard over and over again that I had made a good choice. "Bazaar-Korgon has become a religious place" people told me. As evidence for their claim they cited the increased number of women wearing forms of veiling that covered more of their head and body than was typical in town, or the greater number of men attending the mosque. The citation of these two visible practices revealed more than just evidence of changing religious orientations; they were the beginning of an inquiry into community concepts of religion and its role in public, social life.

During my field work, I attended religious meetings, witnessed rituals, took part in religious education courses, followed the construction of another new mosque, and even "observed" friends undergoing personal religious transformation. Importantly, I also watched and participated in the lives of those who did not take part in any religious events. I firmly believe that this method of data gathering is important not only for more general methodological reasons, but especially because the majority of recent studies on Islam in Central Asia are largely, if not exclusively, based on literature or discourse. Very few use systematic observation of practice as the basis for their arguments and thus miss so much of what is going on in the region.

In addition to the use of participant observation, I also conducted in-depth interviews in the community. These interviews included: "technical" interviews aimed at eliciting specific information about practices, rituals, social life, and organizational matters; topical interviews into various themes relevant to my main research topic; interviews which sought to cross-check information I had gained through other means or through other interviews; and interviews conducted to elicit opinions. I conducted such in-depth interviews with 60 individuals.

I complemented these interviews, with the collection of life histories. After six months of research, I singled out eight individuals from whom I collected life histories. These were people with whom I was already well acquainted. I chose the life history approach specifically because I wanted to see how certain beliefs, opinions, choices, and actions regarding various interpretations of Islam were related to elements in a person's biography. Having already noted that age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic classes affected the type and degree of an individual's religious participation, I chose people who came from various constellations of these demographic features. I also considered their religious beliefs (or lack thereof) and the individual's observance

of religious prescriptions. I conducted between five and ten interviews of at least two hours each with each of these individuals. In addition, I spent time with them on an "informal" basis, and interviewed their family and friends or other community members with relevant opinions about them.

Finally, I undertook two surveys during my field work. The aim of these surveys was to provide supplementary evidence concerning the relationship between biographic features – age, gender, education, socio-economic statues, ethnicity – and participation in certain religious observances. I had developed some hypotheses during my field work and used the surveys to get a broader spectrum of data to further confirm or disprove my ideas. I conducted one series of surveys among ninth grade students in three schools, two of which used Uzbek as a language of instruction while one used Kyrgyz.

The second survey was a household survey also focusing on participation in religious observances. This was conducted in four different neighborhoods – two all Uzbek neighborhoods, one mixed Uzbek-Kyrgyz neighborhood, and one predominantly Kyrgyz neighborhood. I chose the neighborhoods because their ethnic make-up reflected the main demographic patterns of the town. I chose two all Uzbek neighborhoods simply because the majority of the population (80%) is Uzbek. In each case I chose a neighborhood where I had a few personal contacts. I selected one street of approximately ten to fifteen houses in each location and surveyed every house on the street. In the instances where I did not know a member of a particular household, I took along a friend or acquaintance that lived on the same street to introduce me. In the case of the predominantly Kyrgyz neighborhood, I conducted the survey in an apartment building. I used the survey as a structured interview, verbally asking and explaining each question and writing the answers myself. The total number of household surveys completed was 51.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter two sets the scene of the dissertation, describing the physical, demographic, and economic landscape of Bazaar-Korgon along with the historical processes that helped bring the contemporary situation about. The social, economic, and demographic patterns outlined in this chapter provide the basis from which the subsequent topical chapters proceed. The chapter also presents the newly pious and details the debate that has arisen in the community as a result of their "new" visions of Muslimness.

Chapter three takes the religious hierarchy of the town as its theme, describing the functioning and structure of the religious authorities in Bazaar-Korgon, tracing their connections to the *ulama* of the Soviet Period and the newly pious of the post-Soviet era. It demonstrates that the presumed divide between "official" and "unofficial" *ulama* of the Soviet period was highly overstated. Moreover against interpretations which saw *Muslims* as passive victims of either the Soviet state or contemporary "global flows," the chapter shows how members of the "official" and "unofficial" *ulama* were involved in shifting power plays, forming strategic alliances with one another, and with state officials. One set of these power plays which started in the Soviet era and which hinged on a theological debate between the ulama, was eventually caught up with Soviet authorities schemes to do away with the "vestiges of Islam" that persisted in the 1960s. These processes led to the development of the *Wahhabi* discourse and its power as a tool for regulating perceived "deviant" religious behavior. The chapter closes with a discussion of how this discourse was deployed in the early 2000's to remove the most popular religious leader in the community since the end of socialism, demonstrating that the local religious leadership has significant power and ability to shape the religious structures, leaders, and discourse of Bazaar-Korgon.

In chapters two and three I argue that scripture-oriented Islam has indigenous roots in the region and that adherents to this category of interpretations of Islam are largely apolitical. In chapter four I show one of the novel ways that knowledge of scripture-oriented Islam is being disseminated in town – new wedding ceremonies. The organizers of the new ceremonies excise morally objectionable elements from the "typical" wedding events and in their place substitute an Islamic teacher who delivers a message on Islam's "true" nature. For the organizers, the new events are explicitly religious. For the attendees, the weddings are a site where alternative interpretations and ways of living Islam can be explored, without obligation. While in many ways the new weddings are "positive" for these two categories of people, for others in the community they are confronting, objectionable events. Both the form of the wedding and the teachings promulgated at them challenge existing notions about what constitutes "religion," and what makes-up "culture," offering a strong critique to community conceptions of Muslimness and proper religious behavior.

While chapters two through four explore the implicit and explicit challenges that the newly pious pose to other Bazaar-Korgonians, chapter five describes what productive contributions they make to society by looking at a mosque construction project. The chapter argues that the project, which took the combined efforts of neighborhood residents as well as secular and religious actors from the town, *raion*, national and international arenas, facilitated solidarity in a neighborhood

largely believed to be deficient in it. Moreover, it contributed to larger development projects aimed at halting the disintegration of the town's infrastructure. As a project that was explicitly religious, it served as a model of religious social action against notions which posited that collective endeavors for the public good must necessarily be secular.

Chapter six focuses on a popular Brazilian soap opera, *Clone*, aired in Kyrgyzstan in 2004. The program, whose main characters were Brazilians and Moroccans and whose setting vacillated between the two nations, presented a highly orientalized view of Moroccans and Muslim life. But the beauty and the sensuality of the imagery, along with the focus on Muslims made the soap popular, providing positive images of religious-inspired actions – like veiling – that were usually negatively evaluated in town. In this way, *Clone* became a tool which widened many residents' perception about the range of Muslim life. Residents' use of *Clone* in new imaginations of modernity, despite its orientalized content, further demonstrates the power consumers have in subverting the messages of media texts.

Chapter seven charts the trajectories of newly pious women as they deal with the constraints and conflicts involved with their religious commitments. Detailing the religious turn of Mukadas Kadirova, the chapter focuses on difficulties encountered when newly pious women wear the *hijab.* The chapter argues that the similarities which exist between Mukadas's struggle with the veil and those of Muslim women the world over who have adopted this form of dress, can be traced to a common history of modern meta-narratives on religion, modernity, and gender. However, Mukadas's struggle has its own particularities, most prominent of which was her explicit attempt to reconcile her religious obligations with two variant visions of modernity – the Western and Soviet ones – and the economically and morally troubling environment of post-Soviet Bazaar-Korgon. The chapter argues that the dilemmas faced by newly pious Muslim women demonstrate that experiences of modernity can be oriented to the past as well as to the present and future. The dissertation concludes with chapter eight where I outline what implications the material has for studies of modernity and politics, especially in reference to religion's apparent global resurgence.

Chapter 2

On Being Muslim in Bazaar-Korgon

Introduction

The townscape of Bazaar-Korgon is low and sprawling. Walking, it takes at least an hour and a half to traverse the breadth of the town. In most quarters earthen walls line dusty streets creating a landscape that, to the unfamiliar eye, becomes a maze of identical roads. The glare of a midday summer sun blinds those who dare venture out in the 40-plus degree heat. At the right time of day, however, nearly all the year through–winters being mild if you are out of doors in the sun, but bone-chilling if you are in an unheated room–the streets are alive with activity. Women and girls gather at water points, socializing while they wait to fill their buckets. Groups of young men and boys stand or crouch on corners and other nodes along the roadside, not waiting for anything in particular, just talking and passing time. Few residents own cars so most walk stopping along their way to greet friends, neighbors, relatives, even acquaintances; the demands of this kind of everyday sociability makes an already long-walk even longer.

Five large, paved streets cut through Bazaar-Korgon. On one of these lies the current town square where, despite the passage of more than a decade, Lenin still stands hand outstretched, pointing the way towards the socialist future. Behind the statue, at the end of a park full of withered trees – casualties of a ruined irrigation system – is the old culture house (*dom kultura*), still in occasional use but sadly in need of repair. In front of Lenin's effigy is the *raion* administrative building and the telephone and post offices. On the south-west edge of the square, on the hill over looking the bazaar, is the largest mosque in the region, an imposing structure which some have likened to a fortress. A two storied grey and sand colored building decorated with uniformly sized diamonds, its size and location catch the eye of new arrivals on their way to the market or bus station, presenting an image of progress in an otherwise decaying town. Closer inspection reveals the various stages of incompleteness of the complex – the foundation for a minaret never built, the make-shift facilities for the ritual ablutions, the flimsy particleboard hut for the groundskeeper oddly placed in the center of the grounds.

The construction of the central mosque, begun in 1993 and completed in 1999, was nearly universally supported by the community. Perhaps this was because during the 1990s, when all else was falling apart in town, it was the one concrete sign that post-socialist dreams might be

realized. This particular project was important because its realization, involving foreign donors, symbolized successful participation in new political and economic arenas. It was also an expression of newly gained religious freedom. The mosque was a sign that "the transition" to capitalism and democracy would occur – that the dream could be realized despite the massive economic downturn of the early post-Soviet years. Importantly, its construction moved forward through the mid-to-late-1990s when Kyrgyzstan's economic decline reached its nadir.

Just to the northwest of the mosque is the bazaar. The bazaar too was emblematic of the transition – the capitalist marketplace in practice.[13] When other means of subsistence crumbled, countless community members and residents from villages in the region tried their luck as petty merchants in the bazaar. While during the Soviet period there had been some light industry in town and a series of other state-run enterprises, the majority of residents was engaged in agriculture. The town had been comprised of two large state farms. Despite the disbandment of the farming units, the names of these former collectives were still used by the majority of residents as geographic indicators of the townscape. The closure of factories and the redistribution of land among residents in the early 1990s left large portions of the population unemployed. With no other jobs in sight, many tried their hand in the new "marketplace". Sadly, most were not able to reach the state of affluence they equated with democracy and capitalism. In fact, most remained impoverished.

If the bazaar failed to fulfill the economic promises of capitalist dreams, it faired better in providing for the realization of certain democratic ones – freedom of conscience, press, and assembly. The bazaar had become a place to produce, sell, and consume ideas in the form of books, pamphlets, audio cassettes, and CDs. It was also a major node of social interaction and a location where those wanting to get a message across could advertise. And while these advertisements generally concerned new products or the announcement of events, the public space of the market had also served as a venue for conveying religious messages.

Sometime in the year 2000 men stood in front of the bazaar and called listeners to "come close" to Islam (*dinge jakin*). None of my acquaintances could say who the men were but they suspected them to be "Wahhabis" or members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. The appearance of the men and their preaching had nonetheless made an impression on many; their story was explicitly retold to me as evidence that Bazaar-Korgon had become a "religious place". Other indicators residents offered when buttressing these kinds of claims were the new ways women were wearing head-

[13] During Soviet times there had been a kolkhoz-market in the same location where inhabitants bought and sold fruit, vegetables and meat produced on their domestic plots. The range of products available at, and the sheer size of, the new bazaar is much greater.

scarves – and the increasing number doing so. They pointed to the rising number of men, especially young boys, attending mosques and they mentioned the home-based Islamic study groups that proliferated in town. Unlike the construction of the central mosque however, these displays of religious behavior were not as positively evaluated.

Residents of the community read the displays as indicators that the actors adhered to interpretations of Islam and held conceptions of Muslimness at variance with the public norms of the Soviet and early post-Soviet era. While religion was never eradicated in the way Soviet atheizers had wished, the anti-religious campaigns of the Soviet period unintentionally objectified religion, branding it as backward, threatening, or only for the old. Despite this, a strong sense of Muslim identity remained, but one that was detached from many previous (pre-Soviet) religious ideas and practices, and one that had become, primarily, an ethno-national marker. The new public displays of religiosity implicitly – and sometimes explicitly – challenged public norms and personal notions, by asserting a primarily religious nature to Muslim identity. This challenge stirred debate in the community, especially among those who considered themselves "not religious" but Muslim nonetheless.

This chapter answers a single question: What does it mean to be a Muslim in Bazaar-Korgon? It starts not with a discussion of religion but of economy and society, because, for most residents, dealing with the economic and social dislocations of the post-Socialist period is the most pressing issue. For most, religion is at best secondary. The chapter then looks into the Soviet period to understand what contemporary conceptions of being a Muslim are and how they developed, before moving on to a discussion of the newly pious – those for whom religion is of central importance in daily living. The chapter closes with a discussion of the debates that have arisen between the newly pious and other community members.

Muslim life in post-Soviet Bazaar-Korgon

Why did residents of Bazaar-Korgon consider it a "religious place" and what impact did this new religiosity have on social life? The answer begins with the fact that in a town with a population that is nearly one hundred percent Muslim,[14] relatively few were occupied with what residents

[14] During the Soviet Period, especially after the 1970s, the town had a sizable non-Muslim, primarily Russian and other Slavic population. However after the collapse of the union these residents left the area such that by 2003 there were only a handful of them remained. Statistics of the Bazaar-Korgon Village Government (*Bazaar-Korgon aiyl Ökmötünün* place the population in 2002 as 72.4 %Uzbek, 26.4% Kyrgyz, and 1.2% other nationalities.

would classify as religious matters: regular prayer, the study of Islam, or religiously motivated acts of modesty and obedience like veiling. Far more crucial for day-to-day living was economic survival and re-orientating oneself within rapidly shifting economic and political environments (cf. Creed 2002). With few businesses or factories in town, work was found in one of three arenas – the field, the bazaar, or the government. For most, in order to maintain an average income that would feed and clothe a family, provide a comfortable home and leave enough over for small luxuries like televisions, radios, cell phones, and hosting guests at small parties, work in all these sectors had to be combined. When I asked an agricultural specialist from the *raion* government what percent of the population was involved in agricultural work, he replied "everyone."

His answer was not a jest. The land that had belonged to the collective farms had been divided among all residents of the town – regardless of whether they had worked at the collective farm. The amount of land allotted was based on family size. The average allotment was between 50 – 65 *sotik.*[15] In theory everyone was to receive a piece. In practice the land was doled out more quickly to those close to the power centers and those who had worked the land. Others had to fight for their parcels. Interestingly, some of these fights came a decade after the dissolution of the union. In the early 1990s, many professionals – teachers, doctors, and administrators (the majority of whom were Kyrgyz) – imagined that the economic downturn would be temporary. They were not farmers but professionals, they lived in apartments and land seemed unimportant. Only after the reality of the economic situation set in did many of these people assert their right to land. One couple, for example, two physicians in their 50s, received their parcel in 2004. The land closer to town having already been given away, they received their 55 *sotik* (0.55 hectare) on an edge of town that was more than an hours walk from their home.

Inconveniences like an hour's walk didn't stop residents from cultivating cash crops.[16] The parcels of land had become extremely important for income generation and great efforts were put into their cultivation. In the household surveys I conducted, I found that for those families who had one or two adults employed as school teachers, taxi drivers, bazaar merchants, or civil servants bureaucrats, the revenue they received from their land still made up at least 50% of their total income for the year. These people were generally perceived of by their neighbors as economically "average". The rich, of whom there were few, found their money in the same places. They just had a bit more land–usually two hectares or more–had bigger, more successful stalls at the bazaar, or were higher-level bureaucrats. One of the most important means of additional income for household budgets was the money brought in by circular migration. Paid

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[15] One *sotik* is 1/100 of a hectare.

[16] Cotton was the most common but sunflowers, onions, and potatoes were also prominent.

work was not only hard to find in town, its absence was a chronic national problem. Large numbers of Bazaar-Korgonians sought work abroad, primarily in Russia, though there were some from the town working in Turkey and the European Union as well. Residents who migrated to Russia worked primarily as manual laborers and merchants.

The average Kyrgyz household was much smaller than an Uzbek. This was partly because the Kyrgyz living in town had moved there relatively recently, leaving their extended families. Their households consisted of the nuclear members alone, generally two parents and three children. However, extended family members regularly visited and it wasn't uncommon to have a relative – particularly those needing extra care like a small child or an elderly adult – staying for several months. Uzbek families however, had generally lived in the town for a couple of generations; several nuclear families often occupied one piece of land. Among Kyrgyz and Uzbeks alike, the youngest son ideally lives with his parents until their death, upon which time he inherits their home and land. Thus, depending on the stage in the familial cycle, one Uzbek household would likely consist of seven or more members – a married couple, their children, and the parents of the adult male. However, in the post-Soviet period, economic considerations meant that other adult sons frequently remained with their parents as well, building additional structures on the same piece of land for their families. This could mean upwards of fourteen people living together in a family compound (*havla*). However in these cases, each family tended to regulate their household finances somewhat independently.[17]

When asked what percentage of the town's population was poor, a middle-aged, low-level bureaucrat who had been described as having an average income, looked at me, sighed, and said "We are all poor". His first reaction should be taken seriously in one regards – as a comparative statement about the perception of economic and social decline following the collapse of socialism. After a bit more discussion concerning relative levels of poverty – having enough to eat, owning a television, and hosting parties being indicators of the "average" poor – the man guessed that perhaps 20 or 30 percent of the population was "very" or "really" poor. The only available documents on poverty levels – a project proposal produced by the town government in 2002 for a poverty alleviation program – indicated a similar proportion (33%) of the population

[17] 'Independently' is used very loosely. The youngest son and his wife generally had the responsibility for providing meals for themselves, their children, and his parents. Others in the compound were responsible for themselves. Similarly each household financed its own clothes, transportation, etc. But, child care was shared, as were all sorts of material resources like washing machines, irons, stoves, etc. Labor was pooled as were any number of small everyday necessities. Households were usually distinguished by indicating who ate together on a regular basis. The phrase *bir kazandan* (from one pot) was the term most often employed to indicate a separate household.

was very poor.[18] The mayor was a bit more pessimistic; he guessed at least half the people lived in poverty. But what did poverty mean for these men, and for the committee who prepared the report? What did real poverty mean for residents?

For Bazaar-Korgonians, real poverty meant selling household items like carpets and furniture in order to buy food. It meant replacing broken windows with thin sheets of plastic – only slightly thicker than a grocery bag – to keep the cold out. It meant not buying meat and only a limited number of in-season vegetables. Potatoes or pasta (*makaron)* once a day, with a bit of bread and tea for the other two meals, was the norm for the very poor. Real poverty meant owning two pairs of pants – one for the summer and one for the winter. And in the winter, if there was electricity, it meant using a tiny hot plate designed to boil water to heat a nearly bare room of some twenty square meters. That was real poverty. Those who lived averagely however did not always feel fortunate. While they might have had enough to eat, to host a few parties, and even to buy a few luxuries, there were many "essentials" of life they had given up or reduced their standards on. These included buying or building houses for their sons or hosting big wedding parties for their children. They had to find new ways to fulfill these social obligations.

Finding enough money was not the only thing occupying residents' minds in the wake of socialism's failure; they were also discovering novel ways of coping with the economic collapse. In order to construct new buildings cheaply, old structures which had been abandoned by schools, businesses, and families were purchased and the building materials recycled. Bazaar-Korgonians learned how to live in apartments without indoor plumbing or how to repair old machinery, cars, and other electric devices when spare parts were no longer in production. And, of all things, they had to relearn some of the simplest aspects of everyday life that had been taken over by the state, like baking bread. Residents had to adjust to new means of accessing power constellations necessary for obtaining the services, goods, and positions needed for everyday life. The means was money. As Alena Ledeneva argues, what was novel about the post-Soviet situation was not the use of personal networks to gain access to goods and services but rather the monetization of these connections (2006). During the Soviet period, reciprocal exchanges and patron-client relationships were employed to access goods, power, and resources. In the post-Soviet context the space and need was created for profit maximizing and those in power – whether in the government, hospitals, or universities – used their positions for personal financial benefit.

Bazaar-Korgonians also discovered the business behind humanitarian agencies, foreign development programs, and NGOs. Learning to churn out grant proposals, small business plans,

[18] It's difficult to judge these statistics because the documents gave no information regarding how poverty was defined for the study or how the statistics were gathered.

and educational programs in order to garner funds from foreign sources became an art and a business (see also Boehm 1999; Mandel 2002). One afternoon, the *raion* education department visited a local school in order to "assess" it. The visit came on the same day that a group of foreign and national development workers were discussing a pertinent social issue with a group of secondary school students.[19] The head of the education department walked in the class, interrupted the discussion, and took the opportunity to praise the foreigners for helping Kyrgyzstan. He then instructed the students that the surest way to prepare a good future for themselves and their school would be through these foreigners. "Learn to write good proposals. Win grants. That is the key" he told them. Looking to the foreigners he asked: "Am I right?"

These were the new rules of life – the hazy roads of bribery, "democratically elected" but financially influenced power clusters, and foreign grants. These were the matters – along with the daily conflicts, celebrations, loves, losses, disappointments, and triumphs of human interaction – that were central concerns for Muslims in Bazaar-Korgon, the locally labeled religious and non-religious alike. Though in other Muslim societies religious institutions have come to play a powerful role in public life by explicitly dealing with the kinds of difficulties faced by the Muslims of Bazaar-Korgon – especially poverty and lack of social services[20] – the religious institutions that developed in the community until 2004 contributed little in this way. In the first decade of post-Socialism, religious institutions in the community were primarily aimed at religious issues, chief among which was the education and proselytization of the population. While the latter included making the community aware that "Muslim" was a religious category and necessitated the holding of correct doctrines and the keeping of certain rituals, the former meant anything from teaching the rudimentary elements of Muslim spiritual life including, for

[19] The students and development workers were discussing bride-kidnapping (*ala kachuu*). The students watched a film on the topic made by the national development worker present, a young Kyrgyz woman, and Petr Lom from the Central European University in Budapest. The film depicted several instances of bride-kidnapping, showing the various consequences the practice had for those involved. The film was shown at the behest of two Peace Corps Volunteers who had gathered students from three different area schools for a viewing. The film was utilized by the national development worker to raise awareness of the practice, women's legal rights, and the ordinances against bride-kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan. The film was also aired by the Public Broadcast Service in the US. It stirred controversy in anthropological circles where many believed the filmmakers, in documenting acts of abduction without intervening, behaved unethically. See Grant (2005) for a perceptive review of the documentary and the controversies it provoked, and Kleinbach and Salimjanova 2007, Kleinbach, et. al. 2005 and Werner 2004 for more general studies of bride-kidnapping.

[20] For a wide-ranging overview, see especially the articles collected in *ISIM Review* 20, Fall 2007, www.isim.nl.

example, the proper performance of prayer, to educating the next generation of religious leaders and scholars.

Soviet Muslims

In 1998 I was an English teacher in Bazaar-Korgon. One of my students had won a nation-wide competition and been chosen by a U.S. government organization to be an exchange student for one year in Hawaii. I helped her and her family with a number of issues they faced in arranging her trip, including filling out administrative forms. One afternoon Cholpon, then aged sixteen, came to me with a question. On one of the forms she was asked to indicate her religion. Under the box “Muslim” were two choices – Sunni or Shi’a. Cholpon was uncertain which to check. She asked me, “Am I Shi’a or Sunni?”

This story is an example of the kinds of tales that researchers, aid workers, and travelers to Central Asia tell to illustrate to outsiders what it means to be Muslim in post-Soviet Central Asia. Stories like these play-up either the lack of widespread knowledge about the most rudimentary elements of scriptural Islam, or the “un-Islamic” aspects of Central Asian life. Chief among the latter are descriptions of the regular consumption of imported pork sausages or the massive amounts of vodka imbibed at parties. In his recent book *Islam after Communism* Khalid opens with a description of his 1991 meeting with two Uzbek men at a cafeteria in Tashkent. In order to celebrate meeting a Muslim from abroad the two Uzbeks brought a bottle of vodka to Khalid’s table and raised a toast in honor of their acquaintance. The point of stories like these is usually not to demean Central Asians or to judge them for their “less-than-pious” behavior. In fact the tellers are usually trying to counteract stereotypes which see the Central Asian nations are “Islamic Republics” or hot-beds of potential extremism. The point in telling these stories is, even if not articulated or reflected upon, to illustrate the profound effects that seventy-years of socialism had on Muslim practice and knowledge.

While a perfect socialist world never emerged, the decades of modernization clearly altered existing cultural and material landscapes.[21] Anthropologists and historians of the former USSR have demonstrated the way Soviet actions, policies, and their unintended consequences created

[21] The term for this perfect socialist world was “communism.” It was a word rarely used by political leaders who instead resorted to describing the stages – like advanced socialism during the Brezhnev period – that were imagined to lead to communism.

national boundaries, facilitated the formation of ethno-national consciousness, and encouraged the gathering of "cultural stuff" that was associated with each nationality (Slezkine 1994; Grant 1995; Martin 2001; Hirsch 2005; Pelkmans 2006;). The cultural forms were not invented *ex nihilo* – they were largely based on existing material. However, this material were systematized, standardized, displayed, and taught to the "titular groups" involved as well as to other nationalities. The material needed for the national repertoire of traditions of each ethno-national group – national dishes, language, clothing, instruments, and heroes – was largely "gathered" by Soviet ethnographers. In the process, these ethnographers helped create a very "modern" notion of tradition – an objectified set of practices, material objects, and forms of social organization which belonged to a discrete set of people who spoke a common language and belonged to a certain bounded territory. The need to mobilize national identity in order to access power, resources, and social rewards within the command economy of the USSR made the adaptation of these identities essential for survival and advancement (Hirsch 2005; Kandiyoti 1996).

Arguing against Western scholarship which saw the Soviet delimitation of nations in Central Asia as a strategy of "divide and rule" orchestrated and administered by Moscow with no attention to local interests, sentiments, or social patterns, Hirsch sets out a more complex picture of the creation of nations. She stresses the involvement of local communist elites and the consideration of ethnographic factors in the decisions. She also asserts that a distinctive aspect of Soviet rule was that it "defined itself as the sum of its parts" in contrast to Western European colonialism and tsarist Russia "which defined their metropoles in opposition to their colonized peripheries" (2005: 164). Soviet leaders thus "chose to reorganize Central Asia along national, and not tribal, lines because they saw "the nation" as a modern (postfeudal) form of social and economic organization" (*ibid*). By promoting development in all areas of the union, they hoped to speed-up the overall transition to socialism. Soviet ethnographers played a key role in discerning the basis for nations. Key elements in these were "local cultures, religions, kinship structures, *byt* (everyday life), physical type, and languages" (*ibid:* 163). *Byt* as an elemental aspect of the evolving nations would become a key element in anti-religious struggles – and thus inadvertently in conceptions of religion and Muslimness as well.

Eradicating religion

In the early Soviet years anti-religious campaigns were fairly unsuccessful. Leaders of these movements therefore changed tactics multiple times and tried various means to discredit Islam throughout Central Asia. In the Ferghana Valley, where Bazaar-Korgon is located, they

ultimately squared their attack on notions of everyday life (*byt*) as embodied by women and the home (Northrop 2004). They aimed their efforts at veiled women, arguing that their imprisonment in the *paranji* represented the evils of fanatic Islam.[22] Unveiling women was seen as tantamount to their liberation. This emancipation of women was not only a part of the Soviet anti-religious efforts but also a way to create a pseudo-proletariat in an area largely lacking in the class categories needed to implement wider Soviet campaigns (Massell 1974: Northrop 2004).

Early effects of the *hujum* (attack or assault) varied.[23] While some embraced the movement, others rejected it. Discussing the campaigns in Uzbekistan, Kamp notes that "[u]nveiling had supporters and opponents from every social class and group within Uzbek society. There were women who unveiled in opposition to their families, and women who remained veiled in opposition to their families" (2006: 134). The few men and women I spoke to about the campaign reflected not so much on their opinions of the changes, but on the emotions these evoked. An elderly woman in Bazaar-Korgon, for example, remembers how odd it felt when, as a girl, she first left her home without the covering to which she was accustomed. Despite the assault against the veil, she said, she and others continued to cover themselves in a manner approximating the *paranji*. They used shirts and others types of scarves or pieces of fabric which, when men were in sight, they drew closer about themselves. Others, she reported, simply left home less often. But despite these efforts, within two decades of the *hujum's* start, women no longer wore the *paranji* and *chachvon* (*ibid).* While the campaigns emanated from Moscow, national cadres were very much involved in them, as Kamp demonstrates in her richly textured history of the anti-veiling campaign. In Bazaar-Korgon, residents still remember very explicitly who was involved in these efforts. One activist in particular – a Tartar woman who lived in the apartment complexes until her death in the early 2000s – was said to have ripped veils off of women she encountered in the streets. The veracity of the tale is difficult to judge, but the emotion and language involved in describing the event reveals what a disturbing assault the campaigns must have been on the community.

In other parts of the Muslim world where Western colonial powers sought control, the issue of Islam's supposed oppression of women, as symbolized through her "imprisonment" in the veil, became central to debates about deficiencies in Islam and Muslim societies (Ahmed 1992: 164;

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[22] The *paranji* was a large, shirt-like covering worn by some female inhabitants of the Ferghana valley at the end of the Tsarist and the beginning of the Soviet period. The garment was draped over the head and hung loosely over the body. It was open in the front and was either pulled closed by the woman wearing it or was worn with a *chachvan*, a rough horse-hair veil that extended from the top of the *paranji* over the face and down the length of the body.

[23] The name given to the campaign aimed at liberating Central Asian women. Its main symbol was unveiling.

Moors 1998: 210). Instead of taking issue with the colonial focus on women and the veil as the appropriate symbol of Islam, Muslims' counter-arguments implicitly accepted the veil's new symbolic role, and they launched their retaliation by extolling its virtues. Thus it was as much the colonized as the colonizers who made gender and gender seclusion central to the debates over Islam. While there are real limits in seeing the Soviet Union as a colonial power there is nonetheless a parallel between the way debates surrounding women and the veil developed in Western colonial settings and the USSR (Kamp 2006: 6 - 9). Those opposed to the *hujum* read it simultaneously as the continued encroachment of Soviet power into community structures and local power, an attack on Islam, and a threat to the Uzbek nation (Kamp 2006: 186 - 187; Northrop 2004: 185 - 187). No wonder the protection, even the exaltation, of the veil and women's traditional roles – rather than the denial of their value as symbols for Islam and the nation – were the main modes of defense. The focus on women and veiling in the Soviet "crusades" against Islam, and in Uzbeks' defenses of their nation and religion, concurrent with ethnographers' elevation of women and home life in evolving national identity meant that women, the veil, and domestic life became symbols not only of Islam but of an emerging Uzbek national identity (Northrop 2004).

There were other contours to the process of nationalities policies and anti-religious campaigns which had the odd effect of intertwining religious and national identity. For those engaged in the early anti-religious campaigns in Central Asia, religion had already been objectified and differentiated from other so-called spheres of life. As such, they felt they could identify "religion" and launch attacks to eradicate it. Taking the Orthodox Church as a model of how religious life was structured, Soviet atheizers looked for "religion" in Central Asia and targeted what they understood to be the bedrock of Islam – namely the institutional and publicly visible aspects of Muslim life (Keller 1992). While early attacks on Islam were ineffective, long term efforts succeeded in nearly completely eliminating central Muslim institutions and practices such as *waqf* property, religious education, highly covered forms of dress and veiling, fasting at Ramadan, collective prayer, and the networks of religious scholars and leaders. A change of alphabet was forced – from Arabic to Latin and finally to Cyrillic – prohibiting access to philosophical, legal, and literary texts used by religious specialists of the region. Though some of these texts survived until the post-Soviet period and, at least in Bazaar-Korgon were cherished as links with the past and held up as evidence of a chain of religiosity and scholarly learning – the material in them was largely inaccessible to those who secretly owned them. Those who wanted to preserve the books during the Soviet period often hid them. To this day, one old man – who claims to be a descendent of a founding family of Bazaar-Korgon – searches with his sons for the

books he and his father buried on their land. Most likely, he speculates, they are on portions of the family property which were confiscated by government authorities during "*dekulakization*".

What those involved in the early anti-religious campaigns failed to see was that "religion" had not yet similarly been objectified among most Central Asian Muslims, and therefore in some sense there was no "religion" to attack. While the anti-religious campaigns targeted and eventually eliminated public aspects of Muslim life – including institutions of religious learning, religious authority, and collective worship – other notions and practices which were equally important to Central Asian ideas about Muslimness were left alone (Shahrani 1984). Many of these practices, such as the marking of life-cycle events and rituals related to the home, were connected to the domestic sphere. As part of the delimitation of nations and the creation of ethno-national consciousness taking place throughout the union, the concept of "everyday life" (*byt*) had been valorized as a key components of national culture (Hirsch 2005; Northrop 2004). The types of discourses and rituals left to Central Asian Muslims after the early anti-religious campaigns mirrored the elements of "everyday life" which were becoming a key part of folklorized national identity. Hence, Muslim identity became intrinsically tied up with national identity. To be Kyrgyz, or Uzbek or Kazak was to be Muslim. What is unique in this case is that the notion of Muslim identity that emerged was one bereft of key pre-existing Islamic practices, institutions, and discourses.

In a survey of Soviet anti-religious campaigns in the 1984, Yaccov Ro'i notes that Soviet authorities attempted to sharpen their techniques in-light of the persistence – even the growth – of religiosity in the 1970s. One particularly troubling issue for these authorities was the apparent connections between religious and national sentiments they saw in the Muslim populations (1984: 34). Ro'i cites a revealing passage from a Soviet era newspaper of the Kyrgyz SSR in which the *obkom* secretary of Osh Oblast wrote the following:

> 'Some people suggest […] that a person who observes Islamic rites, demonstrates thereby 'respect' for his nation, and in deviating from them insults it.' This, however, was 'a profound fallacy, a viewpoint that is foreign to us. We debunk such opinions, doing everything to make people see the difference between national traditions and religious prejudices' (Ryspaev in Ro'i 1984: 36).

In recognizing the apparent link between religion and nationalism for many Muslims of Central Asia, Soviet authorities were hoping they'd identified one of the elements that inhibited their ultimate goal – the abolition of religion. They were not successful, but their analysis is poignant

nonetheless for it points to one of the unintended consequences of the anti-religious campaigns – the fusion of religious identity with a newly created national one.

Thus when, in the mid-to-late Soviet era, authorities were incensed that religious rites and sentiments were confabulated with national ones, they were pointing to the odd results of their policies and propaganda. An international political union which wanted to go beyond nationalism and a rational scientific state that wanted to eradicate religion had unintentionally created nations and a sense of ethno-national identity that was inextricable bound up with religious belonging. While the atheistic literature of the 1960s explained this by accusing religious authorities of giving "religious traditions, rites and customs the semblance of "national traditions" and in this way ensur[ing] a firmer and longer existence for the Islamic religion" (Stetskevich 1967 in Ro'i 1984: 34) it can be argued that the Soviet authorities were just as implicated in these charges as the religious authorities they opposed.

An excerpt of a conversation I had in 2003 with a teacher at the boarding school in Bazaar-Korgon is illustrative of the kinds of conceptions about ethno-national/religious identity that were prevalent during the late-Soviet and independence years. Nazgul, a woman in her fifties often found my questions about religious matters ridiculous. "We are atheists," she said exasperated. "Yes, we are Muslims, but let me explain – we are all Muslim people, Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Tajiks, Tartars. . . . We were born Muslims. That's it." On another occasion I met Nazgul sitting outside her home with two of her neighbors with whom I was also acquainted. We began talking, and Nazgul, in a slightly less hostile mood, said "Look, we are atheists, but of course we all believe in God. We always did. I do. Now we are free. We build mosques, people pray, that's good. But those, those who wear scarves like this[24] and keep their women at home, they are bad. They are Wahhabis."[25]

In the first instance Nazgul indicated that it was enough to be born a Muslim in order to deserve that title, even if one was an atheist. Her second remark reveals that she also accepted a certain level of religiosity – belief in God, the construction of mosques, and prayer. For her these all fell into the realm of good Muslim behavior. She drew the line, however, at the issue of gender and dress. She perceived the concealment of women not only as a "bad" practice but as a clear

[24] When Nazgul said this she traced an oval with two fingers around her face, beginning at the forehead, following the curve of her hair line and jaw, and meeting just below the chin. The style of fashioning she mimicked is the internationalized 'hijab' or a headscarf which covers all the hair and hair line, is fastened below the chin, with ample material left to cover the neck and often the shoulders. There is no standardized vocabulary to indicate this form of veiling in Bazaar-Korgon. Most describe it as Nazgul did. See chapter seven for a full discussion of veiling.

[25] While the pejorative use of the word Wahhabi to signal a Muslim extremist is now widespread in global discourse, it has a particular history in Central Asia which is explored in chapter three as well as in McBrien 2006b.

sign that someone was a Wahhabi, an extremist. As I have argued elsewhere (McBrien 2006b), the perceived limits to acceptable religious behavior in the post-Soviet period varied from person to person, but there was nonetheless a widespread notion that religious observance could be excessive and this excessiveness posed a threat not just to the individual and his/her family, but to the wider society and nation. The everyday use of the rhetoric on religious extremists was powerful because it was tied up not only with contemporary discourses on Muslim extremists, but with a long history of similar rhetoric stretching from the Tsarist period, through the Soviet era, into independence years.

Soviet anti-religious campaigns, combined with nation-building efforts, influenced identification and self-understanding, producing an amalgamated ethno-national/religious identity; they also influenced notions regarding proper religious observance and appropriate Muslim behavior. Though veiling had been targeted during the early anti-religious campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s, other aspects of *byt* had not. These "domestic" elements of Muslim religious life had not been stigmatized as "bad," or "detrimental". Veiling was, as were other public aspects and (according to Soviet logic) highly religious side of Muslim life. These practices eventually became divorced from widespread articulations and expectations of what a Muslim was or how he/she should behave. Formerly central observances – like prayer, fasting and veiling – were no longer understood as essential duties of Muslims. They were instead considered potentially subversive, fanatical practices and they were labeled as "religious". Thus it became acceptable for Muslims to be largely "a-religious" in public – to abstain from those practices objectified as religion – but to remain self-reflexively Muslim as a result of birth and observance of domestic rituals and life-cycle events.

Concomitant with battles against religion were the promotion of Soviet ideals and the achievement of Soviet modernization projects. While women were being unveiled, they were also being offered new possibilities for work, recreation, and home-life. Notions of gender equality were promoted and discursively tied to the Soviet modernization projects.[26] While it has been argued that the dream of creating a *Homo Sovieticus* was never achieved, the Soviet period did transform, and had lasting effects on, the inhabitants of the Union.[27] Over the Soviet period primary reference points for identification shifted from regional, tribal, and occupational groups to a sense of ethno-national belonging. Mass education became universal, and with it an appeal to texts and the interpretation of them as sources of legitimacy and knowledge. Rational, scientific investigation was touted as the means of personal and societal advancement, and certain real

[26] For a discussion of modernization programs in Bazaar-Korgon see chapters five and seven.

[27] See, for example, Ro'i 1984, Héléne Carrére d'Encausse 1979, and Kowalewski 1980.

technological accomplishments – both small ones at the local level like electricity, plumbing, and the telephone as well as large prestige projects like steel plants and a space program – helped shore up faith in these ideals. The command economy and collective agriculture transformed not only means of production and modes of consumption, but also ways of acquiring and exercising status, influence, and goods (for a recent discussion, see Verdery 2006). Moreover, as has already been argued above, access to goods, resources, favor, power, and social life were also conditional upon proper performance in this ideological environment, helping to ensure its success.

Summarizing the above one can say that although most Central Asians never gave up belief in God or their identification as Muslims, they did adopt many socialist ideals. Moreover, they also began to believe in a secular sphere, in the separation of politics and religion, and the confinement of religious or spiritual beliefs to the private realm. Muslimness, uniquely tied to an objectified national identity, while stripped of many formerly key elements and in many ways secularized, remained. Nationalities policies of the Soviet Union, which made the use of these identities key for advancement, meant a constant awareness of one's own specific ethno-national/religious identity and its difference from the other nationalities of the Union.

Eickelman and Piscatori argue that the objectification of Muslim consciousness "is the process by which basic questions come to the fore in the consciousness of large numbers of believers: 'What is my religion?' 'Why is it important to my life' and 'How do my beliefs guide my conduct?' […] religion has become a self-contained system that its believers can describe, characterize, and distinguish from other belief systems" (1996: 38). While certainly not the intent of Soviet authorities, the consequences of nationalities policies, anti-religious campaigns, and the distribution of resources resulted in the objectification of Islam for Central Asians – at least in the sense of a self-contained belief system discernible from other similarly objectified religions. Theoretically, this objectification enabled Muslims to interrogate their belief system in the manner described by Eickelman and Piscatori.

But as the changing perspectives and tactics of the Soviet state show, while religion may have been a category now separated from other areas of life like economy, politics, or society, it was not always easy to establish the boundaries between these "separate" realms. As Ro'i's article demonstrates, Soviet authorities eventually realized that the "persistence" of Islam into the 1970s lay largely in the realm of the household, lifecycle events, and the veneration of saints, their tombs, and other holy places. Interestingly, as will be demonstrated in chapter 3, the renewed anti-religious campaigns of the mid-to-late Soviet period focused on elements of Muslim life which were equally under attack by religious authorities, though for very different reasons. The Soviet authorities variously viewed the persistence of certain customs and rituals –

"religious" elements of funerals and weddings, the veneration of saints, etc – as the Muslim population's attempt to preserve their religion, the durability of religion and custom, or the incomplete social and economic transformation of Central Asia due to failed Soviet programs.[28] The religious authorities viewed these same practices as innovation or cultural accretion. Thus the debates on religion in Central Asia have always been multi-vocal; it was never just the "great" versus the "little" tradition or the "atheists" versus the Muslims. These dichotomies are too simple and not only disguise the variegated beliefs and practices of Muslims in Central Asia, but ignore the linkages between these categories, the shifting loyalties and power plays involved when actors attempted to mark the limits to them, and the stakes involved in employing them.

Nevertheless, it would be an overstatement to say that these competing voices were widespread during the Soviet era. While revisionist history challenges the view of the Soviet state as omnipotent (e.g. Fitzpatrick 2000, Fitzpatrick 1999, Kotkin 1995) the power of the Soviet system to create and regulate discourses on Islam and Muslimness, as well as its control over public discussion was formidable. If Islam had become objectified in the sense that it was a sphere of life which could be conceived of as separate from others and was a belief system which could be, and was, discernable and comparable to other belief systems, the ability of Muslims to interrogate their own system of discourse and practices was severely limited. Soviet authorities created a set of acceptable answers to the kinds of questions Eickelman and Piscatori indicated in their discussion of the objectification of Muslim consciousness. Moreover, the control of religion and public discussion in general precluded serious investigation into the discourses and ideas which defined proper Muslim belief and practice. Only when the USSR dissolved were Muslims able to articulate these kinds of queries and suggest answers alternative to those dominant in the late-Soviet era. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of who was putting forth these alternative definitions.

"Those who have turned and gone to religion" – the newly pious

The minimal participation in religious rituals, the self-reflexive lack of interest in Islam, and the self-acknowledged small role that religious or spiritual concerns and reflections play in the everyday lives of Bazaar-Korgonians indicate a general outlook and way of living that is secular (i.e. not having to do with religion). Noting how some of these "secularists" themselves make occasional use of healers and diviners, wear amulets, or pronounce blessings and prayers of

[28] On the last point see Poljakov 1992.

protection, it is with trepidation that I use this term. But to be clear, I do so with local categories in mind. If the most minimal definition of secular is "not religious" then many residents have certainly applied this ascription to themselves by way of implication. Even if the term "secular" is never used, or never applied, the "secularists" do increasingly differentiate themselves from a growing number of people in the community who they label as "religious".

"Religious" is a rather loose translation of the cluster of terms used to describe those in the community who adopt, and regularly keep, the prescriptions of canonical Islam. Literally "the religious" are labeled with a phrase - *dinge burulup getkin adamdar* – that can variously be translated as "those who have turned and gone to religion" or "those who have turned and left for religion". Religion in this case can only be interpreted as "Islam" and is the same as the Arabic term *din*. Interestingly, a similar phrase is employed when discussing those who have converted to Christianity. Instead of "religion" (*din*) indicating Islam, they say "Christianity" and keep the rest of the construction the same (*khristianga burulup getkin adamdar*). The phrase implies a sense of leaving a current place or condition and going to another. Thus while the term does not explicitly define the speaker, it nonetheless implicitly marks out his/her relative position. Because the one spoken about goes *to* religion, it marks the speaker as being in a position that lacks, or at least is farther removed from, religion. The "religious" on the other hand, employ a different set of phrases. They would describe themselves and others like them as "close to religion" (*dinge jakyn*), or as having "*come* close to religion" (*dinge jakyn kelde)*. The different verbs used by the two categories of people speak volumes about their self-reflexive differences. For the religious, people *come* to religion. For the secular, they *go* to it.[29]

In this dissertation I will avoid the term "religious" as a qualifier of (groups of) people, and I will not employ the long and cumbersome local phrases – except for when I quote someone or attempt to relay their ideas. Rather I term this category of people – those who were participating in a cluster of practices like regular prayer, veiling, attending the mosque, listening to live or recorded sermons, attending Islamic study groups, teaching others about Islam, calling others to follow the "true path" (*davat*), or making the pilgrimage to Mecca, and who, implicitly or explicitly, were challenging communal notions of Muslimness – "the newly pious."[30]

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[29] Just as the secularist do not refer to themselves as secular – or by any other categorical name, neither are they labeled as such by the religious. Someone might be identified as 'not close to religion' (*dinge jakyn emes*) though this sort of pronouncement is rare and is used only when in the company of friends and relatives. It is more often than not used to describe a person who is of particularly low moral repute.

[30] I do take the secularists perspective by categorizing the religious with a term and not the a-religious. In a sense, I too make them the starting point. I do this for two reasons. First the religious are a numerical minority. Second while they

The demographics of the majority of the newly pious reflect those of the largest portion of the town's population. They are Uzbek. They are equally male and female. They have received primary and secondary education; some have post-secondary technical and vocational training. Few have attended university. They are peasants, petty merchants and traders, seamstresses, cobblers, and unemployed. Of course not limited to these indicators, the newly pious do include a few of the "old" and "new" rich Uzbek families in town – those running cotton ginning plants, trading at larger-scales, and those most likely trafficking in drugs.[31] There are also portions of the Kyrgyz population who could be classified as the newly pious. They are more likely than not newcomers to the community having arrived after the collapse of the USSR when town life and the prospects of trading in the bazaar seemed potentially more profitable than remaining in the villages. Generally speaking the highly educated, middle-to-high level administrators, teachers, and other white-collar workers are under-represented among the newly pious. Likewise, while the ranks of the newly pious include boys and young men (locally understood as lasting until early-to-mid thirties), middle-aged men from in their mid-thirties to fifties were likewise underrepresented. What explains the demographic patterns of the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon? Why was there a religious revival among semi-urbanized, literate peasants (i.e. the Uzbeks) and not among the mid-to- highly educated, white-collar, elites (Kyrgyz)?

Without fully explaining these demographic patterns the larger social context does provide some indicators. In many ways, Bazaar-Korgon should be viewed as an Uzbek town. Its population is 80% Uzbek. It is 30 kilometers from the Uzbek border and, despite stricter regulation of the border by the Uzbeks since 1999, there is fairly free travel across it. Regular contacts are maintained with friends, relatives, and business partners in Uzbekistan. Until the mid-to-late 1970s the population of Bazaar-Korgon was nearly completely Uzbek. It was administratively classified as a village and the majority of its inhabitants were peasants (collective farm workers). In the late 1970s however, it was decided that a new *raion* would be created in the region. The town of Bazaar-Korgon, the largest within the boundaries of the new region, became its administrative head. Importantly, because the new *raion* was part of the Kyrgyz SSR, and since the majority of its inhabitants were Kyrgyz, the state sent large numbers

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imagine a direct link with the pre-Soviet past, the religious are in fact proposing notions, practices, and discourses about Islam and Muslimness which deviate from the most immediate referents – those of the late-Soviet and early-independence period.

[31] I have no evidence for this claim save for gossip and observation. The wealth of two or three families in town – even when compared with that of the owners of the most profitable cotton business – is too great not to be of suspicious origins.

of Kyrgyz men and women to the predominately Uzbek town of Bazaar-Korgon to staff the departments, offices, hospitals, and schools needed to run the new *raion*.[32]

But, unlike the Uzbek peasants, the Kyrgyz were doctors, administrators, agricultural specialist, and other professionals; they were "educated cadres" who came from all over the country, and who had been trained not only in Kyrgyzstan, but at various locations throughout the Union. They were sent to Bazaar-Korgon to create a new Soviet *raion* and with it, to modernize the town that already existed. As a result of these demographic changes, during the 1980s, the population of Bazaar-Korgon was divided between educated, white-collar Kyrgyz, Uzbek *kolkhozniki*, and Russians. Thus the fact that the newly pious are predominantly Uzbek rather than Kyrgyz is just as related to their socio-economic class or position within the state apparatus as it is to their ethnicity. This realization is crucial when considering the penetration of secularism and socialist ideals among the population of Bazaar-Korgon. The Kyrgyz who settled in the town in the 1970s and 1980s were the most integrated into official, state networks, most invested in socialist rhetoric, more open to "control" by officials, and – least we forget – most likely to feel devoted to, and proud of, the goals of the USSR. This is not to say that the Uzbek peasants of the town were subversives set against socialism. As will be argued in other chapters, one of the most amazing things about the USSR was the degree to which socialist ideas and goals penetrated nearly every level of society. But, these socialist notions were received and appropriated differently by local elite and peasants.

This is especially true in regard to the keeping of Soviet-banned religious practices.[33] Less observed by authorities, less invested in the rhetoric, practices, networks, and obligations necessary for success in new social and political environments, there was more space for peasants to maintain these religious practices and fewer incentives to abandon them. However, only the most private, individual practices – like prayer at home – could be maintained. Even when certain observances were kept by those born in the pre-Soviet or early Soviet years, these same observances were rarely maintained subsequent generations. In the life histories I collected, of those Uzbeks born in the 1930s and 1940s who continued to pray during the Soviet period, nearly none of their children did.

By and large, only among those families who claimed a tradition of having religious specialists, scholars, or family members highly knowledgeable about Islam in their family prior to

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[32] According to statistics gathered by the town government, by 2001 25% percent of the town's population was Kyrgyz.

[33] These include veiling, fasting at Ramadan, *zakat,* pilgrimage, and Islamic education outside of the two approved madrasa in Bukhara and Tashkent. Though corporate prayer was allowed at the official mosques, oral histories indicate that attendance was monitored and highly discouraged for non-party members; it was impossible for party members.

the Soviet period, was there continuation of religious observance or practice by succeeding generations in the Soviet period (cf. Babadjanov and Kamilov 2001, and Ilkhamov 2001). Though rare and very few in terms of the overall population, these individuals and their families were important. The religious renewal of the 1990's and 2000's was directly facilitated by the men and women who secretly received religious training from official and unofficial scholars and religious specialists – whether family members or otherwise. It was among these limited number or scholars and authorities that religious thought and practice developed and persisted over the Soviet period.[34] And it was they who taught, guided, and advised those who in the post-Soviet period who had "become interested in religion" (*dinge kyzyktuu boeluep kaluu)* and ultimately those who had a sustained religious change – the newly pious.

I have taken the terminology – "the newly pious" – from Robert Hefner who, when discussing the resurgence of public religion in the Muslim world, thusly labels its main actors. He argues that "[m]ost of the newly pious were primarily interested in just what they claimed to be: religious study, heightened public devotion, expressing a Muslim identity, and insuring that public arenas were subject to ethical regulation. The key symbols of the resurgence were similarly pietistic: reciting the Quran, keeping the fast, wearing the veil, avoiding alcohol, giving alms" (2005: 21). Importantly, he also notes, that "In its early years, the resurgence was a profoundly *public* event, but not one that was especially *political* in any formal sense of the word" (*ibid.* emphasis original). Hefner stresses the public, but non-political nature of the newly pious and their actions, a point which can similarly be made about the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon, but one that is often overlooked, missed, or ignored by residents, Kyrgyzstani politicians, local and foreign media, and outside observers, academics, and officials. Unlike the newly pious Hefner speaks of who have formed religious associations and used them as means of public participation, the newly pious of Bazaar-Korgon have not created religious institutions outside of mosques and home-based study groups (*davat*).[35] Moreover they have not articulated a political agenda, or critiqued the form of governance. Though they may critique the government's functioning or a particular administration, they do so without reference to Islamic discourses as the bases for their appraisals or proposed solutions. They have however, criticized mainstream modes of religiosity and widespread conceptions of Muslimness in town, making their presence in the community and the propagation of their ideas controversial despite the absence of a political agenda.

[34] See Chapter three for a thorough discussion.

[35] The term *davat* has a double meaning. It refers both to home-based Islamic education and Muslim proselytizing efforts. See chapter three for a full explanation.

Contemporary religious divides

I ran into an acquaintance of mine, Eliar a manual laborer in his mid-twenties, on the road to the bazaar early one weekday morning in the spring of 2004. We walked together a ways. Despite Eliar's attempts to maintain a physical space of separation – keeping a generous distance between us and averting his gaze from mine – he nonetheless felt free in conversation; we were old acquaintances and I was friends with both his mother and his wife. Eliar was worried about a friend of his who, according to Eliar, was drinking too much and heading down the wrong path. Eliar had asked his friend to meet him at the local cemetery one night later that week. Eliar, accompanied by a few other young men of the same social circle, hoped the visually confrontation with mortality would compel his friend to give up his errant ways and come closer to Islam (*dinge jakyn).*

I never heard what happened to Eliar's plan. Perhaps the friend realized the intent of the gathering and did not come; it seemed a rather bold endeavor. In fact I never came across any other equally confronting mode of proselytization efforts in all my stay in the town, except perhaps the handful of times "informants" tried to convert me. There were regular proselytizing endeavors occurring in and from the town. Men, and occasionally women, both referred to as *davatchis,*[36] regularly traveled to neighboring and sometimes distant villages to do exactly what Eliar tried with his friend – invite people to come closer to Islam.[37] But even if these activities involved similar kinds of calls, the men and women approached by the *davatchis* knew what kinds of meetings they were being invited to and had the chance to refuse. By contrast, Eliar's proposed meeting seemed more like a moral and religious ambush.

Eliar's story and the *davat* efforts are extreme examples of the religious encounters in Bazaar-Korgon in the post-Soviet period when the space developed for what in short-hand has been called, "the return of Islam to the public sphere" or "a religious revival". These terms refer to a set of events and practices which included (among other things): the individual and collective observance of rituals; the public articulation of religious discourses; focused study of Muslim legal, philosophical, and theological texts; the reinvigoration of a religious scholarly life; self-reflexive religiously inspired bodily fashioning; the construction of buildings intended for religious use; the development of religious institutions; and the diversification of religious ideas

[36] *Davatchi* – one who gives *davat*

[37] For a full explication of *davat*, see chapter three.

and practices. Importantly, not only was there a diversification of ideas and practices which would be classified as "Islamic" or "Muslim" by those espousing the ideas or participating in the practices, but the diversification lead to debate over which practices and ideas were authentic.

While many in Bazaar-Korgon would label practices like the recitation of prayers by female religious specialist during funeral rites (*ma'raka*), participation in certain kinds of healing or divination practices, the use of amulets and charms, or the appeal to ancestors and saints for protect, as inherently Muslim, some of those following scripture-based interpretations of Islam considered them un-Islamic. This debate is an old one in Islam and it existed in a highly restricted form during the Soviet period (see chapter 3). The novelty of the post-Soviet period is the debate's location in the public sphere, the way it informs ideas about proper Muslimness, and the way it affects reflexive use of this term in reference to oneself and others. Johan Rasanayagam's explication of the practice and imagery of healing in the Ferghana Valley discusses the way this old debate between "great" and "little" traditions plays out in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. He demonstrates the linkages that connect the practices and practitioners of these seeming oppositional modes of understanding and living Islam, and shows how the interaction informs contemporary constructions of Muslimness (2006). Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi too illuminates the struggle between these competing visions of Muslimness in her discussion of the holy site Ulli Pir, arguing however that there is an even wider range of interpretations regarding shrine-based beliefs and practices than this simple dichotomy presents (2006). In the case of Ulli Pir, she notes the variegated significance attached to the shrine by "official religious staff, the traditional religious figures, and the pilgrims themselves" not to mention the secular and nationalist meanings attached to it and the general criticism canonical interpretations of Islam present (i*bid:* 248).

The proximity, shared history, and contemporary religious and secular linkages between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan explain the similarities in the religious landscapes of these two nation-states, especially in the shared territory of the Ferghana Valley; comparison of these regions is essential. But, as I argued in the introduction, the divergent political system of the two states, and the policies and actions of their governments, especially since 1999, have increased the gap between the shared experiences of Muslims in these two regions. The most notable differences is that while freedom of conscience in Uzbekistan has rapidly decreased and dissenting voices eliminated, shrinking the possibility for, and scope of, debates like those described by Rasanayagam and Kehl-Bodrogi, the public sphere for debate and action in Kyrgyzstan has remained relatively open. This is also true when comparisons are made with

neighboring Western China where similar debates occur, but are much more constrained due to governmental regulation (see Waite 2006).

In addition to this "traditional" debate over orthodoxy – the contest between the "little" and "great" traditions – there is another important fight for orthodoxy occurring in Bazaar-Korgon. It is between what can be called secularized portions of the Muslim population and those following canonical interpretations of Islam. The crucial matter in this discussion is the redefinition of "Muslim" as a primarily, if not exclusively religious category, rather than the ethno-national marker it has come to be for many. Along with the critique the newly pious pose to the traditions and customs that form central elements of local forms of identification, the challenge they make to ethno-national identity, and by extension to the power of the state to define and regulate "the nation", partly explains why their public, apolitical actions, have become politically charged. As Eickelman and Piscatori's explication of the similar struggles in other Muslim societies indicate, these processes are "…*political* in part because they involve challenges to the limits of state authority but also because they involve a contest over people's understandings of and wishes for social order" (1996: 4).

The newly pious thus pose multiple challenges to other community members. They posit that certain practices and discourse are "un-Islamic", threatening both the religious specialists who officiate the rituals and authorize the discourses, as well as those who participate in and use them. This is a struggle between strict, scripture oriented interpretations of Islam and those focused more on ritual. The other confrontation has to do with the challenge to rather a-religious notions of Muslimness and the position of power these ideas – and those who espouse them – have in the community and the nation. The two challenges are intimately intertwined making the debate in the community one that can not be defined as either "religious" vs. "secular" or "great tradition" vs. "little tradition" – even if one were to accept these two sets of binaries and the false exclusivity they imply.

Conclusion

In Kyrgyzstan, there is a persistent stereotype that Uzbeks are, and have been, per definition, more religious than Kyrgyz. The most widespread explanation for this "inherent" variance is that Islam came late to the Kyrgyz, "settled lightly" on them, and that, as a result of their nomadic ways, textual Islamic knowledge and practices never took root among them. In this reading, the Kyrgyz are portrayed as having mixed their pre-Islamic beliefs, rituals, and codes of conduct with

Islamic ones creating a less orthodox and, as some would argue, more tolerant system and national character.[38] The supposed "national characteristic" of Uzbeks – as "inherently" more Islamic – is offered as an explanation for the increase of religious practice among Uzbeks in the post-Soviet period. Without the constraints of an atheist system, the standard argument implies, their religiosity revived ipso facto. While a full exploration of these stereotypes was never the intent of this chapter – or dissertation – they are worth mentioning because I have encountered demographic patterns in Bazaar-Korgon which seem to confirm at least one of the stereotypes However, I have argued that in the case of Bazaar-Korgon, rather than a biological element of the "nation," the variance in the post-Soviet participation in a set of rituals, bodily performances, and discursive practices which would locally be labeled as "religious" is related to socio-economic class, the maintenance of familial ties, and the relative proximity and attachment to Soviet ideals and power centers.[39]

The fact that the Uzbeks are, by and large, of lower socio-economic levels than the Kyrgyz raises another type of question. The relation of material constraints to religious belief is a contentious topic. Since Marx proffered the notion that religion serves as an opiate for the masses (Marx 2002 [1844]: 170 - 181) – assuaging their suffering, pacifying their revolutionary potential, and legitimating the rule of the capitalists – social scientist have long been intrigued by the role of material, social, or political malaise in religious belief and practice. Biographies of the newly pious indeed show that Islam has been a comfort for them in times of trouble. Moreover, the demographic data I presented demonstrates that religiosity was higher among the lower strata of society, a pattern that would seem to confirm a basic reading of Marx.[40]

But what the above depiction of the non-religious community also shows is that difficult material circumstances by no means necessitate religious turns. And while I claim that Uzbeks were more likely than Kyrgyz to alter their lives so that their actions and discourses more closely mirrored an ideal type prescribed by local variants of scripturalist Islam, this is still, at best, only a partial answer; not all Uzbeks of the town "went over to religion" (*dinge burulup getkin)*. There will never be a purely social, economic, or political explanation for the issue of belief. All that is possible, and all I claim to do in this chapter is to suggest who, in a particular place and time,

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[38] For examples of this kind of logic in the media see the editorial in the *Bishkek Observer,* 29 July 2003, or an interview with then Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev, 24 June 1997, at www.eisenhowerinstitute.org.

[39] This is not an explanation that can be applied, through inference, to the whole country.

[40] One particular Soviet reading of Marx – as exemplified by Poljakov's work – would argue that those who were religious in the post-Soviet period were the category of people never completely 'reached' by the Soviet economic, political, and anti-religious campaigns and thus those still attached to 'traditional' ways of life, including religious commitment.

were more likely to change their actions and discourses, and to present some of the mitigating factors as to why. These demographic patterns can only be the basis for further exploration of individual and collective religious landscapes, which I aim to provide in subsequent chapters.

What this chapter also demonstrates is that the religious landscape of post-Soviet Bazaar-Korgon is not simply an indication of the "revival" of religion which – suppressed for seventy years by governmental policies, anti-religious campaigns, officials in Moscow or Bishkek, and local individuals – returned once these controlling forces were removed. I have described the way anti-religious campaigns and nationalities policies (unintentionally) shaped a unique conception of Muslimness which was devoid of many of the pre-existing discourses and practices and which became primarily an ethno-national marker. Concomitantly, objectified notions of "religion" and "Islam" were created through these same processes. Looking again at the stereotypes on the supposed "religious nature" of Uzbeks, it is important to note that what residents indicated as examples of this nature – veiling, studying Islam from a textual perspective, regular prayer, mosque attendance, making the pilgrimage – are very similar to the kinds of practices they pointed to when they claimed that their town was becoming religious. In short, these descriptions reveal what the categories "religion" and "religious" mean to townspeople. The exploration of the Soviet period provided in this chapter helps to explain how and why these ideas developed.

These notions were part of the basis for the debate that arose in the community in the early 2000s when a growing number of adherents to alternative interpretations of Islam contested these dominant, Soviet and early post-Soviet conceptions. The newly pious contested the legitimacy of practices, understood by many as Islamic, arguing that they were cultural accretions. They also disputed the idea that "Muslim" could be an ethno-national marker without the concomitant "religious" practices and beliefs. While the former dispute is important, it has already received much attention in the literature on Islam in Central Asia and will only be tangentially address in the dissertation. The latter claim has not been well examined; it is the explicit focus and/or underlying current of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3

The structures of religious authority – local power and global systems

Introduction

The Friday mosque of Bazaar-Korgon *Raion* officially opened in the year 2000. The project, which took six years to complete, was led by Tajideen Satvoldiev, the first Head Imam of the *raion* (*Raiondun Imam-khatiby*) in the post-Soviet period. Teacher of many of the young generation of religious authorities, and guide to the newly pious, he was revered by them as a highly knowledgeable scholar and an example of proper Muslim conduct. Tajideen was equally respected by those in the community inclined towards different interpretations of Islam. While neither partaking of his religious instruction nor necessarily agreeing with all his points of view, they nonetheless lauded his "pure" character and his contribution to the community. Despite receiving widespread respect, not long after the mosque opened, Tajideen stepped down from office. The official documents of resignation cited poor health as the motivating factor. Local human rights groups and foreign media, however, indicated that he was accused of being a Wahhabi and forced out of the position.[41]

Was Tajideen a Wahhabi? Are we to understand his removal from office as evidence of the foreign radicalization of "Central Asian Islam" of which authors like Rashid (2002) speak? Or was his removal orchestrated by the national government which, according to standard academic schema, uses the official religious leaders as puppets in its attempts to create a government-friendly Islam? Or maybe Tajideen was indeed simply ill. In fact, none of these are adequate explanations. A mainstream Hanafi scholar and religious leader in the community who was not seeking political change and was generally supportive of the political environment of Kyrgyzstan, Tajideen can hardly be classified as a Wahhabi no matter which of the contemporary definitions – an advocate of a particular interpretation of Islam, a Muslim with a political agenda, or a terrorist – one chooses to invoke. As to the second possible interpretation, while there was indeed a movement to have him removed, it came not from the national or *oblast* government but from

[41] See Keston New Service reports from 16 August 2001 for a limited coverage of the events (http://www.starlight.co.uk/keston/kns/2001/010816KY-02.htm).

within the town. Higher officials were only later involved at the behest of Bazaar-Korgon's religious community. And as to the third possible interpretation, the official reason of resignation, Tajideen told me he was indeed sick – sick of the gossip and fighting that arose when a portion of the religious community decided that he was no longer the right man for the office. *Why* the tenure of Tajideen was ended remains opaque but the processes of *how* is clear. The strategic and opportune employment of the discourses on religious extremism, as embodied by the label Wahhabi, along with the power and connections needed to maintain allegations of this sort. Knowing how Tajideen was removed from office demonstrates the politics of religion in Bazaar-Korgon and the powerful role the local – local actors, small places, and individual interests – have played in what are often read as processes controlled from above.

The literature on Islam in Central Asia has often elevated the force of "the state" or "the global" over "society" and "the local" – resulting in, for example, analytical categories which saw the religious authorities of the Soviet era as bifurcated between the "official" (i.e. government controlled) and the "unofficial" (subversives counter to the government). The story of Tajideen's tenure as *Raion* Imam – both his path to and from the position – serve as a powerful critique of these views demonstrating the real connections between supposedly antithetical groups and the variant directions and means in which power was exerted. His biography – from his youth as a member of the underground ulama of the Soviet Period to his adult role as leader of the post-Soviet religious community – indicates that far from either accommodating to or protesting against ruling forces, religious authorities in the Ferghana Valley of which Bazaar-Korgon is part, have long been actively involved in strategic plays of power – with each other, with society, and with the government. In fact, the development of the *Wahhabi* discourses in the 1970s was itself a product of the kinds of maneuverings and opportune alignments that occurred between governmental actors and religious authorities in the Soviet era, as this chapter will demonstrate. The strategic employment of these discourse to affect Tajideen's removal 30 years later similarly demonstrates the complex relationships that exist between "state" and "society" in the post-Soviet period, as well as how "global" discourse have be utilized as weapons in a small-scale power struggles.

The privileging of "the state" or the "global" as the primary actors in the creation of Central Asian religious landscape also resulted in readings of the religious revival of the 1990s and 2000s as a movement radicalized by foreign interpretations of Islam, again to the exclusion of the agency and influence of the local *ulama* . Certainly extra-regional ideas, money, people, and goods penetrated and circulated in the area, impacting theology, the construction of religious institutions, and ideas about good Muslim conduct. However, the return of Islamic discourse and

religiously motivated action to public spaces in Bazaar-Korgon should also be seen as directly facilitated by local religious authorities like Tajideen who, trained by the "official" and "unofficial" *ulama* of the Soviet period, were positioned to teach and guide those in the post-Soviet period with an interest in textual Islam. These authorities and those they trained, far from exhibiting "extremist" tendencies have in fact validated and promulgated non-violent, non-political conceptions of Islam in which the transformation of the individual is seen as the means for societal improvement.

Tajideen's biography and the story of his resignation signal the power of the local in the face of seemingly "stronger" forces; it details the collision and collusion of state and non-state, religious and secular, or official and unofficial, actors; and it shows the concrete ways elusive "forces" like global discourses are utilized and created by very real, specific players in small-scale battles. This chapter argues against the omnipotence ascribed to "large" actors in the literature on Central Asian religious authorities by drawing attention to the local. This focus on the local does have its costs in contemporary anthropology where the "local" has fallen somewhat out of fashion. Forsaken for projects on global flows, transnational networks, and multi-sited research, single-sited research begs criticism for its supposed blindness to "the larger picture". But if, as Matei Candea argues, we take seriously the insight provided by proponents of these multi-sited methodologies, namely that "any 'global' entity is – must be, can only be – local in all its points" (2007: 170) than inquiries undertaken in a single site, intentionally chosen, and understood as being created by the ethnographic encounter, become "window[s] into complexity" – the kind of complexity understood only to be found in multiple locations (181). The single site – what I call "the local" – carefully studied puts into view the tangled web of multiple spatio-temporal movements, power plays, discourses, and all manner of processes which belie any ultimate closure – be it local or global (Candea 179).

Official Unofficial Religious leadership in the Soviet Era

In an effort to garner the favor of Muslims when their support was needed during WWII, Moscow eased restrictions on religion. Due to the harsh anti-religious campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s little was left of Islamic institutions in Central Asia, save for a few mosques and a handful of religious authorities. Moscow created spiritual directorates to regulate newly permitted religious

affairs[42]. The Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (*SADUM)* authored Islamic publications and regulated Islamic doctrine, a primary means of which was the issuance of a *fatwas* (religious rulings). *Fatwas* were produced by the Fatwa Committee of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate and approved of by the board's head – the *mufti*. The *SADUM* exerted influence in local settings through a series of officials, each of whom was responsible to his superior. The hierarchical administrative apparatus was headed by the office of the *mufti* – the *muftiate* – in Tashkent. Under the *muftiate* were *qazi*s who administered over the republics of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Under the *qazis* were a series of imams whose jurisdiction mimicked the political units of governance – *oblast, raion,* and towns or villages. The Central Asian Spiritual Directorate of Muslims additionally supervised the two madrasas of the region which were located in Tashkent and Bukhara. This structure is known in the literature as the "official religious hierarchy".

The academic literature on religious authorities in Central Asia produced during the Soviet era (e.g. Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay 1979, Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985) – and even literature thereafter (Ro'i 2000, Markarov and Mukhametshin 2003) – understood the official religious leadership to be little more than agents of the Soviet authorities and lacking in societal legitimacy. It regarded religious life as maintained by "unofficial" religious leaders – those not apart of the *SADUM* – who were not only completely separate from but inimical to the "official" religious leadership. This official/unofficial dichotomy structured most academic interpretations of religious life in the region. The unofficial religious leadership was held to be underground scholars, and other religiously knowledgeable men and women, who "preserved" Islam from Soviet attacks and who, being respected by local communities, led the secret and/or "parallel" forms of religious life. While certainly true that *SADUM* was created by Soviet authorities and often worked in collusion with them, and while there was much criticism of the *SADUM* and its members on the part of the "unofficial" religious scholars, the dichotomized and rather antagonistic view of official/unofficial religious leadership obscures the connections between the people and ideas glossed over by labels like "official" and "unofficial". Attempts to regulate Islamic knowledge and Muslim practice, and the strive to maintain or gain power on the part of multiple parties created a much more complex set of relationship than this dichotomy presumes.

[42] The *SADUM* was one of four entities created in a move to simultaneously garnish the support of Muslims – when they were needed during World War II – and to govern Muslim populations. The others were: The Muslim Religious Board for the Transcaucasus, the North Caucasian Muslim Religious Board, and the Muslim Religious Board for the European USSR and Siberia.

And, the relationship of these religious authorities to Soviet authority was more complicated than simple acquiescence or resistance.

Saroyan mounted one of the first critiques of the bifurcated categories of "official" and "unofficial" because they were, he argued, based on notions of power which simplistically juxtaposed state and society (1993). This form of conceptualization Saroyan argued, allowed the characterization of a board of religious authorities who were mere mouth pieces of the state and who were largely disconnected from ordinary Muslims. Challenging this paradigm, he argued that the official religious leadership – who drew their legitimacy from their position as representatives of the Muslim community, as experts on Islamic knowledge, and as Soviet citizens – was involved in an ongoing series of negotiations between a variety of social and political power-holders and were important mediators between these power-holders and ordinary Muslims. "Thus, the Muslim clergy can be seen as engaged in a creative process of constructing new forms of identity and religious organization in order to situate and establish itself and its community in a complex set of constantly changing power relationship"(Saroyan 1997: 34). While here Saroyan focuses on constructing new forms of institutions and "identity," his insight can be applied to other areas – like the production and transmission of knowledge – to reveal the important connections between the "official" and "unofficial" *ulama*, as well as the way both categories of religious scholars strategically aligned themselves with, or against, each other and, importantly, the state as well.

Babadjanov traces the "awakening of Islam" in the Ferghana Valley in the early 1980s to the activities of unofficial religious groups of the 1970s (1999: 113). He notes that these groups included "the descendants of the traditionalist *ulama*, who survived the 'purges' and managed to secretly teach their children and grandchildren and those they especially trusted. As a matter of fact, they all attended the republic's only officially functioning madrasa, called *Mir-I 'Arab*, and even worked for some times as [officially appointed] *imams* and [religious] teachers" (*ibid*). He concludes by noting their dissatisfaction with and criticism of the *SADUM* and the eventual dismissal of many of them from the official religious structure. For Babadjanov this eventual break from the official structure seems to fortify the divide between the two groups and support his theses – here and in other works (Babadjanov 2004) – that the board had little to no impact on the ideas and practices of the Muslim population. While he may be right in his assertion that the *fatwa*s issued by the board were not heeded by large portions of the population, the connections between the official and the unofficial religious scholars – whether through personal contacts or institutional structures – nonetheless shaped the religious knowledge, debates, and disputes of the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period, as the biography of Tajideen's illustrates.

Tajideen Satvoldiev was the first Head Imam of Bazaar-Korgon *Raion* in the post-Soviet period. Born in 1955 in Bazaar-Korgon, he was the son of a collective farmer. During his childhood a paternal aunt who was an *otin-buva* (female religious specialist) and, in Tajideen's words, highly knowledgeable about Islam lived with his family. She taught him and his siblings about Islam. His genealogy reveals a line of religious-specialists, healers, and one ancestor with the title of "*supi*" (Sufi). Tajideen says his own interest in religion began in high school. At that time he began secretly studying Arabic and Farsi (Persian) in the homes of local Muslim teachers. Following high school he went to Bishkek to secure a position at the madrasa in Bukhara. Unsuccessful in gaining entrance and frustrated with his situation in Bazaar-Korgon, Tajideen left his home secretly and traveled to Leninabad (now Dushanbe) in the Tajik SSR. While there he found a teacher who continued his religious education – Mullah Abdirashid Qadi. Tajideen was in Dushanbe for three months before Soviet authorities found out about Abdirashid's *hujra*[43] and shut it down. Abdirashid felt if would be better if Tajideen were near his family, so he recommended him to another teacher in Margilan – Mullah Hakimjon Imam, a prominent Ferghana Valley scholar. While at Hakimjon's home, Tajideen says he was mainly taught by Hakimjon's apprentice. There, along with studying Islamic law and theology, he learned Arabic. He studied in Margilan for two years. Again authorities found the underground school and closed it down. Tajideen moved to Tashkent, where he studied secretly for a year before moving to Andijan. In Andijan he studied with Imam Djamoldin-aka who had been trained in the Bukhara Madrasa. Djamoldin was subsequently given a position as imam in Samarqand. Tajideen followed him and remained until 1978. In 1978 Tajideen returned to Bazaar-Korgon. His teacher, Djamoldin-aka went to Andijan.

When Tajideen first left home in 1971 his parents had been saddened by his departure and his choice of vocation; his father had wanted his son to join him in farming. Though they eventually accepted and supported his desire to study, their impatience with his long absence grew and in 1978 they insisted he return home and be married. Tajideen agreed begrudgingly. He married later that year and settled in Bazaar-Korgon. Following his marriage his religious knowledge, as he put it, became dormant and his own heavy investment in Islamic education ceased for some time as he worked to provide for his growing family. Nevertheless in the 1980s he did secretly give Arabic lessons at home to young boys. He taught them the Arabic alphabet, how to pray and, to the best students, Quranic recitation. This continued into the 1990s. He estimates that during these two decades he held classes, on average, six times a week with each

[43] *Hujra* literally means cell or small room (like in a monastery). In this case, it refers to a secret study group.

class having around ten boys. During the 1980s Tajideen worked first as a security guard for the police office and latter as a foreman for a large bread factory in town. While employed at the bread factory, he traveled quite extensively on tourist trips organized by the government. In 1984 he visited Czechoslovakia, in 1987 India and in 1989 Syria. He made his first pilgrimage to Mecca in 1991. In subsequent years he led groups of people on the hajj, resulting in a total of ten trips in fourteen years.

The intellectual history of Tajideen reveals that there was a much more complex set of relationships that bound the official and unofficial leaders together and more power-plays involved than just the state and its "official" Islam versus the "real, underground" Muslims. First trained by his aunt and later underground scholars, when Tajideen wanted to continue his religious education his first thought was to attend the madrasa in Tashkent, hardly a logical choice if the institute would have been perceived of as wholly illegitimate. Most certainly, the intent of the Soviet authorities was to control and further regulate the ideas of Muslims through these institutes. At the same time, the institutes were the last remaining religious centers of higher education, where religious leaders sought to continue a certain tradition of scholarship, and in light of new experiences, policies, discourses, and frames of reference, attempted to work out the nature of Muslim life in a particular political setting. For some this may have been an attempt to intellectually meld Islam and socialism, for others it may have been an attempt to help Muslims find an appropriate way to live a "proper" Muslim life under Soviet rule, and for some studying or teaching at these institutes may have been a means of survival or a road to power.

Tajideen was not allowed to officially study in Tashkent because he was too young, a fact he tried to conceal from authorities but which eventually prohibited his entrance to the madrasa. Frustrated with this turn of events he continued his underground study, where again he faced opposition from Soviet authorities who closed the *hujra* (secret study group) where he was studying. Yet even then, he was not wholly disconnected from the official religious hierarchy, for as his biography reveals he later studied under an officially trained imam. While certainly there must have been intellectual disputes between official and unofficial religious authorities, and within each category as well, there was nonetheless cooperation, dialogue and tutelage, as Tajideen's biography reveals.

Tajideen's biography is also important for what it shows about the relationship of "unofficial" religious authorities and the local systems of Soviet governance. Despite his religious observances, study, and role as a teacher – all of which, in retrospect would qualify him as a "real, underground" religious Muslim – he was also linked to official religious authorities and obviously integrated into the Soviet system. He rose to the level of foreman in a bread factory.

Moreover, during the Soviet era Tajideen was able to make three trips abroad in five years, no small feat for a man from Bazaar-Korgon especially considering how rare and highly coveted these trips were. In order to establish the kinds of networks, perform the necessary favors, and incur the required debts that must have been needed to secure his places in these organized trips, Tajideen's involvement in local power networks could not have been a mere ruse used to disguise his religious activities. In fact it was networks – both within the religious communities and with influential members of the *raion* and town governments – that later motivated town elders to choose Tajideen as the post-Soviet R*aion* Head Imam. Tajideen's life-story complicates then not only the categories "official" and "unofficial" as they were applied to Soviet-era religious leaders, but also conceptions of the "hidden" resistance and Soviet anti-religious policies and discourse.

While the term "official" might be accurate in describing the category of scholars who during the Soviet period belonged to the Spiritual Directorate the way this has often been interpreted in academic analysis – that the official religious leadership was viewed as completely illegitimate, that they were direct agents of the state, that there was little more than hostile contact between them and "unofficial" religious authorities or that the official leaders were not genuinely interested in the Islamic doctrine or the spiritual lives of the Muslims under their jurisdiction – appears, at least partly, false. Within the little space that existed, Muslim religious authorities – official and unofficial – remained actively engaged, debating and constructing Muslim life in Soviet Central Asia. That disagreements and divisions occurred which did not strictly follow the categories "official" and "unofficial," as will be illustrated in the subsequent section, shows the limits to these categories as well as limits to the power of Soviet authorities and their policies to control Muslim thought and practice.

Schisms and Labels

Tajideen's scholarly biography is exceptional. As part of the underground *ulama* of the Soviet period, a group whose numbers must have been very small indeed, he was connected directly to some of the most influential scholars of the period and one of the most important debates among them in the late-Soviet era. Theologically speaking, the debate centered on the propriety of certain rituals and practices – one camp accusing the other of allowing cultural accretions to replace true Islamic practice, the accused claiming that their opponents were guilty of ritual innovation. But the argument was equally about the proper relation of religious authorities to the regulations and institutions of Soviet governmental control. The debate did not remain however

solely a discussion between religious authorities. For their own reasons, Soviet leaders became interested in some of the practices under dispute. What resulted was an odd alignment of Soviet leaders, some official *ulama*, and unofficial, reform-minded *ulama* which shows that carrying out demands made by Soviet leaders was not necessarily a matter of accommodation. Sometimes, as the following discussion shows, it was a strategic alliance of parties whose ultimate goals were in fact highly divergent.

In the late Soviet period the practice of so-called popular or domestic Islam became stronger and more apparent.[44] Finally aware of the religious significance of such beliefs and practices, the Soviet leadership attempted to rid the Central Asian populations of these "vestiges of Islam". One means of doing so was to pressure the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Central Asia to denounce such practices as un-Islamic. The religious leaders of the board and the various religious authorities below them had their own theological reasons for wanting to expunge these practices as well. Thus, in a series of *fatwas* and religious publications they attempted to dissuade Central Asian Muslims from participating in such practices.

While the Soviet authorities were attempting to rid the area of the vestiges of Islam, the idea of an "orthodox" Islam, free of the aberrations of shrine worship and certain "domestic practices", became important among certain portions of the religious leadership (Babadjanov 2004: 170; Saroyan 1997). This idea sparked debate among the *ulama*, official and otherwise, in which it was argued that at least some of these domestic forms were in fact sanctioned by the Hanafi School. Muhammadjan Hindustani, one of the most important scholars of the Soviet period, and his students were at the center of these debates.

Hindustani was one of the few *ulama* who survived the anti-religious campaigns and purges of the 1920s and 1930s. While he interpreted his actions during these years as an effort to preserve Islam, his students, looking back from the mid-Soviet period, judged his behavior as overly accommodating to the Soviet regime and they criticized him for not having taken a stronger stance during these early anti-religious campaigns. Theologically, they also accused him of having condoned the persistence of certain cultural traditions among Muslims – and the association of these practices with Muslimness – despite the "unIslamic" nature of them. These traditions included "improperly" conducted lifecycle rituals, shrine visitation and saint veneration, or the wearing of amulets and charms, for example. In short they constituted the so-called "domestic" Islam or the "little" tradition. Hindustani, on the other hand, criticized his students of ritual innovation and deviance from Hanafi interpretations of the Quran, hadiths, etc.

[44] The following historical account is a synthesis of works on the Central Asian *ulama* by Babadjanov (1999, 2004), Babadjanov and Kamilov (2001), Saroyan (1997), and Shahrani (2005).

The most prominent of these students were Rahmatullah ‘Alloma and ‘Abduvali-Qori. One of their former teachers, and most likely one of Hindustani’s own students – though he later denied it – was Hakimjon, Tajideen’s teacher of two years.[45]

Theologically, these opponents of Hindustani – or reformers as Shahrani has referred to them – rejected nearly all the so-called domestic forms of Islam in Central Asia.[46] Because of the convergence of Soviet aims to eliminate the vestiges of Islamic practices and the reformers’ desire to reform Central Asian Islam, Soviet authorities allowed these religious authorities greater freedom to spread their ideas, hoping that their teachings would help curb the religiosity of the masses (Babadjanov 1999: 3). While the ultimate goals of the three parties – the reformers, portions of the official *ulama*, and Soviet authorities – remained divergent, the manner through which they attempted to fulfill their aims – the elimination of “domestic” Islam – had momentarily converged allowing their unlikely alliance.

However, this uneasy coalition did not last long. As the ideals of reformers became clearer and their numbers of adherents grew, the Soviet authorities recognized the political threat they posed. The purified form of Islam that the Soviet authorities had been backing for some time appeared to be far more subversive than the “domestic” forms endorsed by Hindustani. They discontinued their tacit support of the reformers and the relationship between them took another turn which would leave a lasting impact on the religious landscape of the area for decades to come. Jettisoning their alliance with the reformers Soviet authorities began recasting them as politically threatening. In the 1970s, those in political and religious power also began using the term *Wahhabi* as a way to label Muslims whom they perceived to have deviant points of view. Actual Wahhabi ideas from Saudi Arabia may have been among the ideas used by the reforms, though they most likely had indigenous theological roots as well. Babadjanov and Kamilov (2001) speculated that the term *Wahhabi* was first used by Hindustani to label his own students whose theological ideas had veered from his and who had criticized local Islamic practices that the *alim* validated. Whatever the genealogy of the term, it stuck as pejorative label for Muslims whom state and religious authorities considered deviant or threatening. As I have argued elsewhere (McBrien 2006), the term was successfully associated with the reformers’ “type” of

45 According to Babadjanov and Kamilov, “many Hanafite theologians in the Ferghana consider [Hakimjon] to be (perhaps with justification) the father of all ‘neo-Wahhabist’ groups in the Valley” (2001:201).

46 I have chosen the designation reformers, though with certain reservations because of the likely heterogeneity of the group. It most likely involved *ulama* with Salafi orientations – those typically labeled as ‘reformers’ in much of the anthropological literature on Islam as well as Hanafi *ulama* involved in criticizing the so-called popular forms of Islam. Of course those potential Salafis and critical Hanafis differed in their opinions, but the existing literature does not reveal whom the Soviet authorities allowed more liberties.

Islam – an interpretation which criticized certain accepted modes of Muslim behavior in the region, appealed to textual sources for authority, sought to cleanse Islam of cultural accretions, and asserted the primary importance of participating in certain rituals and bodily fashioning – such that even if not referred to directly in state-level and media discourses, the label was explicitly used with reference to these practices at the local level.

Though these early reformers found followers, many Central Asians held negative views about them because the reformers directly criticized their main modes of religious expression as un-Islamic. Moreover, the general population viewed the so-called Wahhabis with suspicion because of their emphasis on religious practices that had been objectified as "religion" and often negatively stereotyped as "extreme". A large portion of the *ulama*, both official and unofficial, was equally against the ideas of the Wahhabis because some of them held divergent views on the validity and use of the four Islamic legal schools. Moreover, it is plausible that the Soviet regime, in light of its experiences in Afghanistan and its fear of a Muslim population unified under the banner of Islam, employed the term itself and solidified the equation of "Wahhabi" with "extremist". Thus, from many fronts the reformers (whether actual Wahhabis or not) were viewed with suspicion and perceived as a threat, though for different reasons and from different angles. Nevertheless, the common usage of the term *Wahhabi* solidified its place in the Central Asian lexicon.[47]

Tajideen never articulated a position regarding the split among Soviet-era Ferghana Valley ulama. He studied under a scholar – Hakimjon – who has been linked to the strongest reformist movements in the area and in recounting his biography made no repudiation of this scholar or his teachings. Yet, Tajideen himself appears to be less inclined towards certain reform-minded impulses in the area than his former teacher. For example when asked about whether he accepts or rejects practices like the wearing of amulets he responded that he respects Muslims whose beliefs and practices vary from his own. Small variances in the observances of rituals – like prayer – are also unimportant, he said.

After telling an extensive story in which two prophets debate the ritual performance of a shepherd, Tajideen explained that one prophet told the other "The important thing is that he [the

[47] The local discourse has even reached academic circles. Indeed, in a 1999 issue of the journal *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, of seven articles that discuss the Central Asian situation, four include explicit references to the special usage of the word in Central Asia. For example, Malashenko wrote, 'Islamism or, to use official Uzbek terminology, Wahhabism', and Babadjanov noted that 'Ferghana fundamentalism' is also 'known as "Wahhabism", "political Islam", etc.' (Babadjanov 1999; Malashenko 1999). At the time this explanation was relevant because the term Wahhabi, as short hand for Islamic extremist, was not as widespread. Today, the proliferated use of the term *Wahhabi* often obscures the complexity of the processes that have unfolded in Central Asia.

shepherd] believes in Allah with his heart." [48] Tajideen concluded the story be saying "So what I want to say is that even if we wear amulets (*koz munchik)* we do it with some kind of hope that Allah will keep us from evil things." If the intention of an act is good – as long as it does not go against the unity of Allah (*shirk*) – he said he respects that act. Counter to this, when I asked several of Tajideen's students – young men in their mid-to-late twenties – similar questions, they articulated positions at odds with Tajideen's and more clearly in-line with the reformists. One young man claimed that "we should rely on Allah to protect us, not on amulets (*koz munchik*)". Tajideen's students likewise strongly disagreed with shrine visitation and the veneration of saints on the same grounds.

Shahrani's (2005) classification of the two groups involved in "The Great Schism" into the categories of "traditionalist" (among whom was Hindustani) and "reformists" is certainly more helpful than the continued employment of terms like Wahhabi; it overcomes the normative labeling involved in any invocation of this term.[49] It also illustrates the commonalities between this dispute and similar ones among *ulama* of other parts of the Muslim world, namely the move to "purify" Islam. The theological discussions involved in "The Great Schism" and those which continue in the post-Soviet Ferghana Valley, at their root attempt to unravel the influence of the Soviet-era processes on conceptions of Islam and proper Muslim conduct. On the bases of the opinions they have formed in the course of these debates, reform-minded *ulama* have attempted to reconstruct religious doctrines, rebuild religious institutions, and re-instate the influence of Islamic inspired notions and actions in social life in accordance with the newly "cleansed" visions of Islam. The divergences in opinions regarding amulets or shrine visitation are just two examples.

The regional use of the term *Wahhabi* and the association of this label with potential subversive Muslims and their supposedly politically-threatening visions of Islam has melded with contemporary international discourse of a similar nature – though the labels "terrorist," "extremist," and "radical" are more often employed in these arenas.[50] This fusion of terms and modes of interpretation has unfortunately clouded foreign perceptions and interpretations of the Central Asian landscape. Regional usages of the term Wahhabi in power struggles that have little to do with religion are taken up by foreign media and politicians as factual indicators of the religious landscape. A lack of investigation into, and little evidence about, the religious and

[48] The prophets referred to in this story were Moses and Jacob.

[49] Babadjanov and Kamilov continue to use this term in an otherwise excellent article.

[50] The terms terrorist and extremist are also used in Bazaar-Korgon. Even when Kyrgyz or Uzbek are being spoken however, the Russian words for these terms – which themselves are English cognates – are used.

political actions and discourses of Central Asians has created a situation where apolitical religious movements are read as politically subversive and potentially violent. This has contributed to interpretations which see "Central Asian Islam" as "radicalized".

An apolitical Central Asian Islam?

When analysts write of the "radicalization" of "Central Asian Islam" one must ask what exactly they mean. Most likely, they refer to the assumed proliferation of ideas which advocate violence as appropriate means to reach certain ends or to viewpoints which meld political and religious ideas. One would think of, in the Central Asian case, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) which wished to turn Uzbekistan into an Islamic Republic and which used kidnappings and other forms of violence in its attempts to overthrow the Karimov regime. Although such instances of political Islamism should not be ignored (and should be studied in light of state repression), discussions of the radicalization of Central Asian Islam often include nearly any sign of scripture-oriented religious discourse or action as evidence of this supposed nefarious turn. These canonical interpretations of Islam may indeed be violent in some respects – if, for example, one thinks of violence in reference to sequestering and the restrictions male adherents of these interpretations often make on women's mobility, opportunities for education and work, and overall possibility to carry out and protect their own interests. Most of the people adhering to such interpretations are not however, politically minded or anti-government; nor do they support violence (i.e. kidnapping, mutilation, murder, or war) as an appropriate means of action.

Importantly, whether "traditionalist," or "reformist," one congruency among religious authorities, scholars, and students in Bazaar-Korgon is a conception of religion as a separate category of life and one which should not be conflated with politics. As discussed in chapter two, an unintended result of the anti-religious campaigns was that religion became an objectified and separate category of life. Having stripped imams, *moldos*, *damlas*, *qazis*, and other leaders of political, legal and to some degree social power, their domain became religion per se. Moreover, with the only real possibility for concerted, organized religious life being limited to the mosque, but having prohibited the usage of mosques for any social or political purposes, their imams became firmly "religious" leaders.[51]

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[51] It is intriguing to compare the debates and movements in Soviet Central Asia to what Barbara Metcalf has called the 'traditional' reformists groups of the Tablighi and the Deobandi. There are congruencies between the Deobandis and Tablighis and the Central Asian reformists. And while there is much ground to believe that there have been recent and

Religious authorities and their students in Bazaar-Korgon, even if never classifying themselves as a group – either as opposed to the "non-religious" or to each other based on theological, legal, or philosophical differences – do nonetheless differentiate themselves from Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international political Islamist party dedicated to bringing back the caliphate (www.hizb.org.uk). While accepting members of Hizb ut-Tahrir as part of the Muslim community, the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon are nonetheless often engaged in heavy debate with members of the group on a wide variety of issues including the attachment to and uses of the Islamic legal schools (*madhabs),* as well as the role of religion in society and politics.[52] Regardless of their opinions on specific leaders and government policies, the majority of the newly pious uphold the stance that religion and politics should be separated. This is especially true among the religious leadership whose validation of a non-political Islam is also essential for the security of their position as members of the state-monitored official religious hierarchy.

However, this congruence in opinion does not necessarily indicate a conformist view which somehow proves that the *ulama* are mere mouth pieces for the state. While the legacy of Soviet-era scholarship and the contemporary situation in Uzbekistan leads to readings of the *ulama's* stance in this vein, it is not the only possible explanation for their position. Metcalf has shown, for example, that similar apolitical, rather secular stances toward the separation of religion and politics by Tablighis and Deobandis have actually been opportunistic rather than conformist (2002). By adapting to various political regimes these religious groups are able to achieve their ultimate goals namely "teaching and providing both practical and spiritual guidance to their followers" (*ibid*: 2). The religious leaders of Bazaar-Korgon articulate support for the separation of religion and politics on a number of grounds, one of which is in reference to the state and its laws, but another which is supported by reference to Islamic texts and principals. Moreover,

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long-term connections, there is no firm data. One of the most striking similarities between the ulama in Bazaar-Korgon and the Deobandi is the articulation of a reformist, yet a-political, agenda (with variation on the degree and severity of reform) and an emphasis on proselytization. Metcalf notes that "the historical pattern launched by the Deobandi ulama for the most part treated political life on a primarily secular basis" (2002:16). However, without firm evidence of connection between the groups to explain the similarity, one could also argue that the congruence was a result of the shared framework of secularism, nation-states, and modern conceptions of religion and politics. The matter awaits further investigation.

[52] These debates often occur on an individual basis. Though I never observed them, several informants told me of their encounters and discussions with members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. An intriguing example of these kinds of encounters which I was able to observer occurred at the new wedding depicted in chapter four. I tried to speak to members of Hizb ut-Tahrir myself on a number of occasions but they would not agree to meet with me. My liaison to members said they were aware of who I was and what my research was about. While they had no qualms with my work – assuming that it would lead to my conversion to Islam – they would not meet with me.

Bazaar-Korgon's religious leaders' perspective is also comprehensible when one appreciates their valuation of religious freedom in relation to the suppression of religion in the Soviet period and in reference to the contemporary situation of Uzbekistan where harsh control of religious behavior and the elimination of opponents to the Karimov regime – no matter what the basis for opposition – rendered the situation in Kyrgyzstan an appealing one.[53]

Their rather a-political stance does not mean that the religious authorities are uninterested in societal reform. Post-Soviet Bazaar-Korgon is very much perceived to be in a state of moral decline, especially among those for whom the Soviet era is still a strong reference point. The rising levels of crime, development of an organized drug trade, increased alcohol abuse and public drunkenness, prostitution and international human trafficking, as well as overall economic hardship are indicated as evidence of this state. But until this point, the religious authorities have not attempted any societal reform in an institutionalized manner, except via the reform of individuals through the institution of *davat* (Arabic *da'wa*). It is hoped that individual change will result in a societal one as well.

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In this section I have argued against views that interpreted Central Asian religious landscapes, especially during the Soviet era, as divided between official and non-official Islam. Tajideen's biography and the genealogy of the term *Wahhabi* indicate that while there were divisions in the Muslim community (especially between its leaders) the division centered on the distinction between what Shahrani has labeled traditionalist and reformist visions of Islam. However, even this never came down to a clear-cut division; rather because of the interactions between Soviet state organs and Muslim leaders, a more dynamic landscape emerged. Yet when the Soviet leadership came to see the "*Wahhabis*" as the main threat and managed to popularize this derogatory label, the diversity of the religious landscape was shrouded behind the term. The increasingly widespread use of this term to refer to anyone with deviant opinions about Islam and the label's association with political subversion, meant that its use obscured the largely apolitical nature of reformers specifically or the post-Soviet "religious revival" more generally. This is one

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[53] Subsequent events in Kyrgyzstan following the completion of fieldwork may have altered this view. In 2006 a prominent imam in Osh was murdered most likely by government agents (*Radio Free Europe*, August 7, 2006. www.rferl.org.) The Kyrgyzstani government had previously alleged that the man was a supporter of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Imam Muhammad Rafik Kamalov reputed these claims repeatedly in national and international media.(*Institute for War and Peace Reporting,* October 4, 2004, www.iwpr.net)

of the reasons that while the interpretations of Islam in the region are, by and large, apolitical, the processes unfolding in Bazaar-Korgon have become politically charged.

Home schools and the religious revival

In 2002 Ahmed Rashid, an influential Pakistani journalist whose books – all dealing with Islam in Central Asia – have reached the New York Times best seller list, described the return of religious discourses and religiously motivated actions to public spaces in the Ferghana Valley in this way:

> "Even before the breakup of the Soviet Union, there had been a huge spurt in the building of mosques […] A year later – October 1991 – there were more than a thousand new mosques in each republic […] Sufism flourished […] Adult women set up home schools, where they taught children the correct way to pray. This indigenous Islamic revival was quickly radicalized by the arrival of outsiders."(Rashid 2002: 54 - 55).

In the previous section, I argued that interpretations like Rashid's are faulted because of a misreading regarding the supposed political nature of "Central Asian Islam". In this section I argue that these interpretations are likewise flawed because they misinterpret how Islamic knowledge was spread. While in the passage quoted above Rashid rightly indicates one of the main means through which knowledge was disseminated in the post-Soviet period – home schools – his treatment is nonetheless misleading.

To be fair, Rashid's book is about Political Islamist movements in the region; a full discussion of home schools was not his intent. Nevertheless, his portrayal is insufficient first because it accords the schools the role of only the most basic religious education – ignoring their functions in the development of local religious leaders, in transmitting and discussing Islamic theology, and as locations where Muslims work out the contours of proper religious life in the post-Soviet era. Second, his juxtaposition of a description of these religious processes with the statement "[t]his indigenous Islamic revival was quickly radicalized by the arrival of outsiders" somehow indicates that the home schools and the other processes he described either ceased in light of foreign forces or were completely corrupted by them. In short, from Rashid's analysis we can conclude that despite what happened in the early 1990s, today's religious landscape is the product of extra-regional radicalization. I contend that not only is his hypothesis about a radicalized Central Asian Islam misleading, his presentation of how contemporary landscapes

came about – especially with specific reference to home schools – is utterly flawed for it flattens out the role, and ignores the impact, of the "indigenous" movement.

However one interprets the contemporary return of religion to the public sphere in Central Asia – as benign, potentially threatening, or already radicalized (or a combination of these, which allows for the complexity of religious processes) – it was directly linked to the religious authorities of the Soviet period and the debates in which they were already engaged. The authorities, as Tajideen's biography demonstrated, passed-on a certain amount of textual Islamic knowledge and continued debating and amending conceptions of Muslim life in light of their lived experiences. And, as will be subsequently argued, this knowledge and these debates were carried on into the post-Soviet period as well. Initially, the primary forum through which this knowledge was transmitted was the home schools which Rashid references. In Bazaar-Korgon of 2003, these home schools were referred to as *davat*. But the word *davat,* however, encompassed more than home schools. As in other contexts, *davat* (Arabic *da'wa*) indicates the calling of people to Islam. The form – home schools or local missionary endeavors – varied. In this section I examine *davat* in both its forms, arguing for its importance in teaching and guiding the newly pious and in attempting to alter communal conceptions of Islam. Importantly, I demonstrate that *davat* as home schools led by male and female religious specialists trained in the Soviet period, was the main means through which textual Islamic knowledge was disseminated in the post-Soviet period, enabling the growth of the so-called religious revival.

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Seventeen women sat quietly on a glassed-in terrace on a sunny afternoon. They were waiting for *her* arrival. The group usually gathered every week for lessons at Amina's house. Amina would read from the Quran, hadiths, and other religious texts[54] that had been passed down through her family as well as new ones obtained since the collapse of the USSR. She gave an exegesis of the texts, telling supplemental illustrative stories. The women practiced their recitations of the Quran and sought advice regarding proper Muslim behavior and good conduct in troubling circumstances. But things were different today, quiet. The group was waiting for the arrival of a religious specialist invited for the day's *davat.* She hadn't arrived so following the women's recitations from the Quran, Amina decided to continue with the lesson as usual and began by

[54] The texts Amina-apa said she used were the Quran, hadiths, and Chagatai texts which she said were "our own religious scholars." She named: Imam Bukhori, Attermiziy, Aloviddin Mansur, Ibn Kassir, and an unnamed author from Osh. She showed a few of the oldest texts to me.

reading a text. Amina paused when one of the young girls living at her home called her. The women looked at the windows and began to chatter excitedly to one another. “She’s here, she’s here,” they said. Amina rose and walked to the entrance of her compound (*havla)* to greet two women. One was dressed in blue, with a scarf on her head, fastened beneath her chin. She removed the small piece of fabric veil that covered her nose and mouth. The other woman, completely swathed in black, lifted the long cloth that hung over her face, body, and upper-legs, revealing her face and another black dress and headscarf beneath. After greeting Amina, they walked to the terrace and sat down in places of honor. Rakhima, the woman in black, took of her gloves. She began her own lesson – teaching the women and taking their questions.

The *davat* group’s excitement that day was due to the special appearance of Rakhima, one of the most revered, respected, and admired female religious specialists in town. One of the few women in town who completely covers her body – including her entire face and hands – when she leaves the home, Rakhima began in this way in the early 1980s when she married. It was something she’d considered for some time she said and the moment of her marriage seemed the right time to start. It was a big decision to make in the Soviet period, one which forced her to leave the home at the oddest of hours and travel only by car so she would not be noticed.

Rakhima was the granddaughter of a famous *atincha* and a healer from Suzak, a neighboring community. Rakhima said that she never intended to be a teacher, people just started coming to her. By the time I met her, she was the leader of a study group for other female religious specialists (*atinchas*), teacher to several young girls who lived, or regularly visited, her home, and was often invited as a guest to teach at other home study groups. Humble, but nonetheless aware of her fame, Rakhima offered a tentative explanation. “Perhaps it is because of my grandmother. Maybe her good name has been passed on to me.”

Rakhima may be right. When the Soviet Union collapsed, those wishing to pray, to learn about Islam, or to have information about particular practices or ideas went to the locally available religious scholars, those who’d been trained in secret *hujras* or at home, like Rakhima. Amina too was born into what she called “an Islamic family”. She lived and studied with a locally-famous female religious specialist (*otin-buva*) in Andijan for five years in the late 1970s. After marrying a man from Bazaar-Korgon, she moved there and began teaching her own pupils who lived with her. In the post-Soviet period she continued this practice but also began conducting weekly lessons for older girls and women. In the mid-1990s she began covering not only her head when she left home, but her lower face as well. She was a respected, and well-liked, teacher among women in the community even if she lacked the fame of Rakhima.

It is not surprising that, like Amina and Rakhima, of the ten biographies I collected of locally influential male and female religious specialists (*moldo*, *atincha, otin-buva*), teachers (*damla*) and imams, who were instructing large numbers of students and were well-connected in the networks of the newly-pious, all had reached maturity in the Soviet period and all were either from religious families and/or had studied Islam either secretly or officially in the Soviet period. These men and women estimated that on average they taught approximately 50 students a week. And while it is not clear how many study groups were in town, I personally attended and heard of enough of them to feel certain that they were popular, numerous, and in nearly every neighborhood.[55] Most of the younger generation – those 30 years and younger – whose influence and status as a "religious" or "knowledgeable" individual was growing, traced at least part of their own religious and scholarly history to these local teachers and, in some cases, to their teachers as well. This genealogy of scholars – from the Soviet period (as traced in this and the previous section) to the adult leaders of the post-Soviet community like Rakhima, Amina, and Tajideen, and finally to the rising young scholars, leaders, and specialist of the early 2000s – indicates that much of the "return of religion" to the region was facilitated by local actors. The primary means was through *davat* as home-based Islamic instruction.

Similar to Peletz's description of *dakwah* movements in Malaysia, *davat* in Kyrgyzstan entails calling others to Islam which includes proselytizing and efforts at "making Muslims better Muslims" (2005: 245). However unlike the Malaysian setting, there are no *davat* organizations, no political participation, and no collective efforts at providing social services, except for religious education. In Kyrgyzstan, the word *davat* has two connotations. First it denotes proselytizing efforts. Men and, on occasion women, hold *davat* meetings, either in their own town or in other villages, towns, or cities. They invite residents of the area to attend these meetings where sermons are given. Additionally, men and women engage in individual discussions about the "true nature" of Islam with strangers. In both cases, listeners are invited to "come close to Islam". Once a week, a group of men – and once every month a group of women – gather at the Friday mosque of Bazaar-Korgon *Raion* to travel to neighboring villages for *davat*. While the imams and qazis authorize these endeavors, they are not the ones who carry them out.

Since the majority of Kyrgyzstan's inhabitants are Muslim, this is less a call to conversion than a call to live according to certain interpretations of Islam. One aspect of this is conceiving of "Muslim" as a religious category which requires the adherence to a set of rituals, bodily

[55] This is not to say that everyone who attends a study group necessarily takes a pious turn, attends the groups regularly, or retains a sustained interest in learning about Islam. However the number does at least give an indication of the widespread interest in learning more about Islam.

comportments, and ethical norms. As was discussed in chapter two, this definition of Muslimness is at odds with that definition prevalent among the non-newly pious. Thus in the very overt act of *davat*, but also in other public acts of piety the newly pious regularly engage in, they challenged community norms and collective notions of identity, calling others to adhere to interpretations like their own.

Second, *davat* is used in reference to home-based study groups where one gives or attends "*davat*". Men and women elect to hold or attend these regular study group meetings. In these meetings – like the ones lead by Tajideen, Rakhima, Amina – members usually begin by learning the Arabic alphabet and the pronunciation of Arabic words. From there they learn to recite the Quran – though they rarely ever learn to understand the recitation. In addition to this, the teacher spends time instructing students on proper Muslim conduct and the basics of Islamic doctrines and practices. This is usually done through textual exegesis and the use of instruction manuals which illustrate proper performance of rituals like prayer. Most students own their own copy of the Quran, though the type and condition varies with the income of the student. Teachers use a variety of texts, with no standardization from group to group.

Some *davat* groups were open to outsiders, the membership being based around everyone's desire to study with or receive advice from a particular teacher. Other groups were based on *gaps* and they tended to be closed to people within the social circles of the *gap* groups. G*aps* are small groups of men or women which meet together, usually on a monthly basis, to share a meal, socialize, and support one another. These social groups are typically made up of classmates, neighbors, or age cohorts otherwise connected. Kandiyoti and Nadira Azimova have shown how these groups provide a variety of functions ranging from the financial to the spiritual, arguing that the in the case of women's gaps women experience as a "seamless totality" the "economic, social, and religious components of ritual and associational life" (2004: 336). Despite this general picture of *gaps* as groups which meet a variety of women's needs, not the least of which is the "enactment of communal belonging and solidarity" (*ibid*: 337), in some cases male and female groups have been transformed into overtly religious study groups whose main purpose is to gain knowledge of textual Islam and to seek advice about proper Muslim living.

If enough members of a pre-existing *gap* group are interested, they invite a local teacher (*damla*), imam, or religious specialist (*atincha or otin-buva*) to regularly meet with their *gap*. Study groups are formed in other ways. Sometimes, teachers have enough individual students – in this case usually young students still in elementary or secondary school – that they form a group from them. They may also open up meetings conducted with two or three individuals to include others. The study-group meetings are usually weekly. While many of the groups are made up of

youth and young adults (locally up to about 35 years of age), there were also groups formed for older men and women.

A significant portion of *davat* groups are run by current – and former – imams as well as those around them (their assistants, students, teachers, and wives). Strictly speaking, the groups do not fall under the control or regulation of the spiritual board. Their teachers are not, for example, appointed or trained by the board nor are their materials provided by or tightly regulated by the spiritual authority. However, it is the task of imams to check-up on any study group or religious gathering to insure that neither the teacher nor what is being taught falls outside the boundaries set by the *muftiate*. Additionally, leaders of neighborhood committees (*mahalla komitet)* – voluntary associations that work in conjunction with the town government – are similarly asked by the town government to be aware of anything suspicious in religious gathering.

In the post-Soviet era, the institutional forms through which residents of the town have come to learn about textual interpretations of Islam and to seek guidance in proper conduct are consonant with local historical forms (the *hujra*) and simultaneously mirror contemporary international varieties (*da'wa*). Yet the similarities should not be overstated; a consonant institutional form does mean an equivalent function or set of effects. Today's *davat* are no longer the secret enclaves of religious learning they once were, even if some opponents in town suspect them to be secret terrorist cells. Moreover, though they mirror international movements to "call" others to Islam (*da'wa*), they do so in a locally specific way. This understanding of similarity and difference should likewise be applied to the other institutional aspects of religious hierarchy in Kyrgyzstan. As will be demonstrated in the next section, the organization of *ulama* in Kyrgyzstan strongly resembles the structure of religious leadership in the Soviet period. However in the post-Soviet period what was once a rather small-space for independent action on the part of the *ulama* has become much larger. The power of local actors to shape their religious landscapes – especially regarding the selection of leaders – has grown.

The structure of religious authority in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

In 1993 Tajideen was approached by a group of elders (*aksakals*) and asked to become the imam of the *raion's* Friday mosque. At the time, it was an old mosque located somewhat away from the town center in the quarter of the former Komsomol State Farm. Tajideen said he was a bit surprised at their request. But he acknowledged that one of the reasons they asked him was

because they believed he would be able to develop the land in the center of town which had been given to them by the district government.

> I didn't have a relationship with them [*aksakals*]. I knew all of them, and we greeted each other in the street. Why I was elected? I am not sure. But the main reason is that for two years there had been a goal of building something on the land they had in the town center. But, it was never begun. [The aksakals] said 'This teacher (*damla*) has a lot of friends, he gets along well with people, he is active. If we elect him [his friends] will help him reach our goal.

Tajideen accepted their request and was made imam. Already an important teacher, his influence widened. He taught two subsequent imams of Friday mosques – one of which took over his post as Head Imam – as well as many of the young men who are today becoming known in their neighborhoods as knowledgeable about Islam.

Tajideen was selected by local elders who signaled him out not only for his "religious" qualifications, but importantly for his social ones as well. Both types of connections he had developed in the Soviet Period in his duals roles as an "unofficial" religious authority and Soviet manager. Tajideen's biography provides a starting point for understanding the contemporary roles of imams in the religious life of Bazaar-Korgon and the durability of Soviet and post-Soviet categorization of religious leadership.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the newly independent republics nationalized the formerly regional spiritual authorities mirroring them in form. The Spiritual Board of Muslims in Kyrgyzstan (*DUMK)* was established in 1996. During the Soviet period, the Central Asian board was directed by a *mufti.* But with such a sizeable area under his administration, offices in each of the five republics had been set up to help administer them. The head of these was the *qazi.* In the post-Soviet period, the Muslim Spiritual Board of Kyrgyzstan is headed by a mufti, while the religious affairs of each *oblast* are in turn regulated by a *qazi.* There is similarly a department of *fatwa* and of publication within the *muftiate* which together seek to produce and regulate acceptable Muslim doctrine and practice in the country. Just as in the Soviet period, the Muslim Spiritual Board of Kyrgyzstan is a hierarchical administrative apparatus that while independent from the government, is nonetheless supervised by the State Committee of Religious Affairs. Importantly however, unlike the Soviet government – whose strength and legitimacy afforded it considerable control over the spiritual board of its time – the Kyrgyzstani government is weak and its legitimacy is constantly contested, reducing its influence over the spiritual directorate.

A *qazi* in Kyrgyzstan is charged with supervising the imams of his *oblast*, appointing new imams, evaluating the religious knowledge of the imams, and regulating religious publications and education in his area. There are no religious courts in Kyrgyzstan and the *qazi* of each *oblast* does not perform any legal tasks. Under the *qazi* are head imams *(raiondun/shaardin Imam-khatiby*) who are the religious authorities for the *raions* and large cities. Under these *raion* (district) heads are imams *(Imam-khatiby)* who officiate over other Friday mosques in towns or villages. There is, for example, one other Friday mosque in Bazaar-Korgon in addition to the one over which the *Raion* Head Imam presides. Finally, there are the imams of the small mosques of cities, towns, and villages which are used on a daily basis.

The Head Imam of Bazaar-Korgon *Raion* officiates over the area from the administrative center of the district, the town of Bazaar-Korgon. He is also the head of the central mosque of r*aion* which is likewise located in the town. On average, 800 – 1,000 males attend this mosque every Friday.[56] The *Raion* Head Imam has the responsibility of overseeing all religious matters in the area including: the publication of religious materials, the regulation of religious proselytizing (*davat*), the regulation of madrasa, and the selection and supervision of imams. As of 2004, there were 101 mosques, and thus 101 imams in the *raion.*[57] The Head Imam recites the Friday prayers at the *raion* mosque and delivers a weekly message. His position is not paid, though like other religious specialists in town, he receives "unofficial" remuneration for providing services to community members (e.g. the reciting of prayers, performing wedding ceremonies, etc). The day-to-day religious affairs of the villages of the *raion* and the neighborhoods of towns are primarily left up to the local imams. However, the spatial proximity of the mosques and imams in Bazaar-Korgon town to the Head Imam and Friday mosque of the *raion* means that they are more heavily influenced by the *Raion* Head Imam.

[56] The attendance numbers varies both on a weekly, but especially on a seasonal, basis. Numbers are higher in the winter, when agricultural work is at a low. The numbers cited here are based on my own observations. I collected my data in two ways. First, I regularly went to the mosques on Fridays and though I was not allowed inside, I was able to count the shoes which were left outside the building. Second, I waited outside on the grounds until prayers concluded and was thus able to perform a rough count as the men left the building and socialized on the grounds. In his 2004 report to the Qazi, the imam of the *raion* reported average attendance as between 1000 – 1200. Attendance peaked at the end of Ramadan (November 2003) when approximately 3,500 men attended Friday prayers. A large portion of them prayed outside the building. I gathered my data through similar methods but in this case, I was also able to obtain a copy of a video recording which had been taken inside the building during the Ramadan prayers. I was thus able to more easily count the number of men inside. Since I was outside the building that morning I was also able to count the number of men outside the mosque.

[57] As documented by the *Raion* Head Imam in his 2004 report to the Qazi on the mosques and imams under his supervision.

In 2004 there were 28 mosques in Bazaar-Korgon town and at least one construction proposal on the table. Since the population of the town is roughly 30,000, there is nearly one mosque for every 1,000 inhabitants or one mosque for every 500 males in town. The number should be reduced even more to account for young boys who do not attend the mosque. But the rough figure of *one* mosque for every 500 male inhabitants gives a close enough estimation of the saturation of mosques in town. As already mentioned there are two Friday mosques in Bazaar-Korgon, the larger *raion* mosque and a smaller one originally constructed in the early 20th century.[58]

Despite the fact that the religious leadership is organized hierarchically and in many ways designed from the top down, local actors retain a high degree of agency in choosing leaders and influencing the local structures, as the opening story of Tajideen's selection demonstrates. For those with a vested interest (whether that be religious or otherwise) in who leads the Islamic community, and what these teachers do and say, in Bazaar-Korgon, there is plenty of room for local influence in the process. Because the imams are quite influential, the selection of a leader also implies an endorsement of the kind of Islam to be widely taught in the town.

According to the constitution of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, an imam is appointed by the *qazi* of his *oblast*. In reality, the process is far more rooted in local action. To begin with, an imam can only be appointed if there is a mosque to which he should be attached. Mosque construction in Bazaar-Korgon has primarily been accomplished through locally led initiatives, as will be demonstrated more fully in chapter four. Small communities based on neighborhoods and informal networks decide to build a mosque. The process often needs help and leadership (in the form of outside donors, local "experts" and religious authorities) and thus does travel out of local hands. But the initiative and the final product remain in the hands of the local community.

This community often selects an imam themselves, usually from within their own ranks. If a suitable candidate is available, he is suggested to the *Raion* Head Imam. The Head Imam then presents the candidate to the *qazi* who "appoints" the man as imam. Every two to three years the *qaziate* (the office of the *qazi*) holds an exam to test the knowledge of the imams. However, as Tajideen laminated, the tests are often for show as the majority of imams are unable to pass. However Tajideen was hopeful that with the new opportunities for Islamic education – both within and outside of Kyrgyzstan – there would a greater pool of knowledgeable candidates to choose from in the future. Only if no real candidate for the position exists in the community does

[58] Attendance for Friday prayers in this smaller Friday mosque is 200 -300 men.

the *qazi* actually appoint an imam over a mosque. Even then, he selects on the advice of the *Raion* Head Imam who in turns searches for someone from a neighborhood near the mosque.

From a local perspective, the *muftiate* appears of relatively little importance regarding the appointment and regulation of religious authorities. The leaders are viewed as locally chosen, rather than appointed, and their "localness" – being from the community and a part of its networks – helps validate their authority. Yet for others in Bazaar-Korgon who may not attend the mosque or *davat* groups, or who may not individually seek the advice and/or assistance of religious authorities, the legitimacy of these leaders is validated by their connection to the national hierarchical structure (the *DUMK)*. Despite seeing connection to, and thus regulation by, the national structure as an essential element in the validation of authority, there is still an underlying notion that the leaders are legitimate because they are local. Local, in this reading however has shifted from the town to the nation. Religious authorities are perceived of as legitimate by these people because they conform to "local"- i.e. national – conceptions and practices of Islam as defined and regulated by the *DUMK*. In essence, they are not foreign "radicals" attempting to corrupt "local" forms of Islam.

Since independence, the Kyrgyzstani government has attempted to control definitions of Muslimness to secure that "tolerant," "democratic," and "moderate" interpretations of Islam are practiced in its borders. In doing so it promotes a vision of Muslimness consonant with that of the Soviet era, which was in essence an element of national identity. The indirect regulation of religious authorities, Islamic doctrine, missionary endeavors, religious publications, and religious meetings by the state through its unofficial influence of the *muftiate,* ensures, for those in Bazaar-Korgon who have begun to distance themselves from the newly pious, that "religion" in their town remains of the benevolent variety. For these residents the regulation of religious authorities fortifies the borders around proper Muslimness which, in their conception, is an ethno-national/religious identity. Thus while it may be irrelevant to them who a particular imam is, his "locality"- i.e. one who endorses proper notions of Muslimness as it relates to ethno-national identity – is ensured by nature of state approbation of his role. Furthermore, the regulation ensures that "local" – i.e. Kyrgyz or Uzbek – Islam is not contaminated by supposedly "radical" foreign influences.

Fissures in the community: Tajideen, the Friday mosque, and the threat of foreign radicals

When the group of elders originally approached Tajideen and asked him to become the *Raion* Imam, one of their hopes was that he would be able to develop the land in the center of town that the *raion* government had allocated to them. The land was located on the hill overlooking the Bazaar, near the *raion* government offices. Initially, the elders wanted to build a madrasa on the land. There was already a Friday mosque operating at the time. However, it was a fifteen minute walk from the center of town or, in Tajideen's word was "in the corner." Tajideen argued that *Raion* Friday Mosque should be more centrally located. His push for the mosque project was also influenced by his trips abroad.

> The permission to build a mosque had been given in 1991 but nobody had taken the responsibility [to build it]. So in 1993 I was the imam and decided to do something useful for the people; I had the idea of building a mosque. I had traveled a lot since 1982. I went to the Czech Republic and Poland. Later I was in India and Syria. I went to the Arab republics when I went on Hajj [in 1991]. I saw beautiful mosques along the main roads. I saw women and men coming to pray namaz. I was kind of jealous. I thought "Why don't we have buildings like that?" I thought about our mosques. They were little, dark, cold. I thought about our mosques and wondered why we didn't have any with domes like those in Bukhara or Samarkand.

The aksakals were skeptical that enough support could be raised for the project. Tajideen however, mobilizing his relationships with contractors and builders in Uzbekistan, as well as his "foreign friends" convinced the aksakals. Construction began that year.

Stories and opinions concerning Tajideen and the construction of the *Raion* Friday mosque are not hard to come by in Bazaar-Korgon. When I arrived in the community in September 2003 the primary focus of research was the mosque and the details of its construction. Thus within days of my arrival I heard about Tajideen and his somewhat larger-than-life role in the community. It didn't take long either to find about the controversy surrounding him and the people in the community who had been opposed to him. The fascinating stories prompted further investigation. In the beginning I asked nearly everyone I knew about Tajideen. It didn't take long to find out that nearly everyone knew of him, respected him, and wondered about his removal. Many had their own version of the story, though certain elements consistently ran through all the tales

Over the entire course of my fieldwork I continued to investigate the matter, focusing more intently on the main actors. I met with Tajideen extensively, interviewed his students and talked in depth with those who opposed him. In other words, I attempted get as wide a range of views as possible on the events. The absolute validity of the stories I have collected and presented here are impossible to ultimately verify Nonetheless I present the stories, and the basic chain of events that I have distilled from the body of material I collected about Tajideen, the mosque, and his removal from office because they do reveal important elements about religious life in the town. They demonstrate the level of local involvement in establishing and loosing religious authority and religious position. They show the way religious hierarchies (or top-down policies) are corrupted to establish a more "democratic" system. Finally, they lay bare the power of labeling in a context in which fears of radicalism run high.

It was largely as a result of Tajideen's networks that the construction process of the *raion* mosque was so successful. Local connections with a well positioned official in the district government smoothed over legal hassles. Other local networks secured the bulk of materials needed for the project. Contractors and architects in Uzbekistan (who he knew through a relative in Tashkent) provided the technical capabilities. Perhaps most importantly, large amounts of economic assistance came from sources in Saudi Arabia and Turkey who he had met on Hajj.

Tajideen's strong leadership and vision for the mosque also won him support in the community. When questioned about the construction of the mosque, Tajideen always emphasized first and foremost, the involvement of the local community. He explained with pride how people gave whatever they could to realize the dream – money, food for workers, construction materials or labor. In fact nearly every neighborhood in the community took ownership of constructing a few meters of the mosque (whether literally with physical labor, through donations of materials or money). Contribution to the construction of the mosque was widespread in the community, even among those who today do not attend it. Those who helped in the project were proud of their involvement and of the outcome. Nevertheless, the role of the community is not foremost in people's minds when they discuss its construction. When asked "Who built the mosque?" most people reply "Tajideen". When pushed a bit more, they sometimes also referred to the "sponsors from Arabistan".

In addition to the construction of the mosque, a re-landscaping of the grounds and the erection of a large minaret were planned. The mosque was completed in 1999 and the foundation for the minaret lay when the controversy surrounding Tajideen began. A group of men opposed Tajideen's leadership and mounted a movement to oust him. Those who described the events hypothesize that the opposition was dissatisfied with Tajideen's alleged combination of business

and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Others argued that those against Tajideen started the moves to oust him on the premise that he'd embezzled money or goods from the mosque project. Another tale insisted that he had sold local girls in Saudi Arabia.

At the same time the moves against Tajideen began, a native Bazaar-Korgonian, Rahimjon, who had been trained in the Bukharan madrasa during the Soviet Period and who had worked for many years in Bukhara as an imam, returned with his family to live in town. He positioned himself, or was positioned by others, to replace Tajideen. The religious community surrounding the mosque split in their support of the men. Those against Tajideen sent written protests to the *qazi* in Jalal-Abad. They laid various allegations against him, and supported Rahimjon on the basis that his education was more "formal" than Tajideen's. As the opposition grew, the nature of the claims shifted and allegations that Tajideen was a Wahhabi were made to government and religious authorities at the *raion* and *oblast* levels. The main force behind these accusations, Tolombai, was Tajideen's relative. Tolombai was a well known builder in town and the constructor/owner of the tea house adjacent to the mosque. Nevertheless, despite Tolombai's attempts to participate in the design and construction of the mosque he was not included in the project.[59] His bitterness over the slight was still visible a decade later.

Still unable to obtain his removal, Tajideen's opponents mobilized their connections in the *raion* government, convincing a *raion* government official to put pressure on the *qazi* in Jalal-Abad to remove Tajideen from his position.[60] In the end, Tajideen himself decided to step down. The official report cited "poor health" as the reason for his resignation. When he spoke about the matter with me, he refused to discuss the movement against him – never openly mentioning it and never directly accusing anyone of attempting to remove him from his post.[61] He said merely that he'd grown tired of the gossip and infighting; he felt there was too much injustice. In short, he says, he became displeased with the work. Askar Jalilov, a local human rights activist, reported that petitions signed by residents had been sent to the *qazi* immediately following Tajideen's removal. They asked for his reinstatement. The efforts were to no avail. Rahimjon, the Bukharan trained imam, replaced Tajideen as *Raion* Head Imam.

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[59] He claims that he opposed Tajideen because Tajideen was a Wahhabi and got his money from Osama Bin Laden. He describes the architecture of the mosque as fitting for a fortress, not a place of prayer. He says it does suit Tajideen and all his 'terrorist' followers who need a place to hide. Tolombai remains in his tea-house day and night so as to 'protect it' from 'terrorist' who he believes want to burn it down.

[60] By that time Tajideen's own connection in the *raion* government was no longer around.

[61] Others who had talked to Tajideen directly, or who had heard accounts of Tajideen's side-of-the-story, similarly remarked on his unwillingness to blame or make accusations against his opponents. They cited his ability to refrain from defaming those who had launched such an attack against him, as evidence of his pure character.

Rahimjon, however did not last long in his position. After one and a half years he was removed from office and replaced with Toktosun, the imam at the time of research. Toktosun himself had been a student of Tajideen's and was the assistant imam from 1992 until 2000. The circumstances surrounding Rahimjon's removal are even less clear. Some indicated that the *qazi* had removed him from office because he was supposedly linked to Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Other residents claim that it was in fact his son, who oddly disappeared from town for a few years, who was involved with Hizb ut-Tahrir. They say the blame was misplaced on the father. Meanwhile, under Rahimjon and Toktosun, the construction of the minaret, which ceased when Tajideen was removed, was never completed and no further work on the grounds' renovation was done.[62] Despite all the gossip swirling around Tajideen and his removal from office, he remained one of the most well respected men in town. He was lauded for his pure, kind, and true character; for his religious knowledge; and for his ability to do something concrete for the community – the construction of the mosque.

While the opposition's specific grievances with Tajideen remain opaque, the means they employed to oust him are clear. Unable to obtain his removal from office themselves, the opposition cast him in such a light as to force the hand of secular authorities and his religious superiors. By branding him a Wahhabi and gathering either sufficient "evidence" or enough powerful support to back their claim, they levied a charge which could not be ignored in the contemporary political environment.

Peter Mandaville argues that while the contemporary pluralization of Islamic religious knowledge and authority is often linked with the process of globalization they are in fact not new in kind but rather only in degree, that is, in their extent and intensity. The unprecedented scope of pluralization has had important impacts on the politicization of Islam, he argues:

> With discourses about 'authentic Islam' or 'true Muslims' increasingly framed in terms of how one responds and positions oneself in relation to various geopolitical agents (e.g. the United States, al-Qaeda) and events (e.g. American military action in Afghanistan and Iraq), the articulation of 'Islamic' positions and viewpoints is easily ensnared within a discursive field defined in geopolitical terms. That is to say that claims and pronouncements as to what Islam is and is not tend to function today simultaneously as statements of geopolitical and geocultural affiliation (2007: 112).

[62] No major work was done on the grounds of the mosque while I was researching the topic. In the summer of 2004, prior to the awaited visit of the president of Kyrgyzstan to Bazaar-Korgon, some ground was cleared and a new decorative fencing was placed around the grounds. Toktosun informed me that no other major work was planned as there were no further funds available.

If Mandaville's analysis is powerful in reference to Muslim minorities in Europe and the U.S. and the way their articulation of Muslimness must necessarily be in dialogue with specific national and international political conversations, it is nonetheless so in a different context where the political agents and events against which one is positioned are more broad than concrete. In Bazaar-Korgon when one speaks of Muslimness, it may not be in direct dialogue or with specific reference to for example the discourses on military action in Iraq, but it is certainly within broad frames of "moderate" Islam and the dangers of religious extremism. When residents criticize home-based study groups, they appear to do so with ideas of the malevolent, incendiary capacities of secret, cell-like activities, notions produced as much by current geo-political events as by the experiences and discourses of the Soviet era. And when they speak of "good Islam" they do so in reference to a national ideal of moderate religious belief and practice, threatened by extreme foreign voices. These views have been created and melded because Bazaar-Korgon has never been isolated – extra-regional discourses, institutions, and actions have long been part of everyday life, even if these international forces were not always the ones imagined. These views ultimately enabled Tajideen's removal.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for the importance of "the local" when interpreting Central Asian landscapes. I have done so not because I believe the region is disconnected from the rest of the world. Rather because the actors of small towns like Bazaar-Korgon and the significance of their actions, discourses, and institutions have been lost in accounts of "the state and Islam" or "foreign forces and the religious revival". Until now most scholarly work on religious life generally (and the functioning and influence of religious authorities specifically) in Central Asia have reified the entities and mechanisms of control and subjugation, ascribing near omnipotence to the "higher powers" (state and globalization) of control and simple acquiescence or complete resistance to the local. I have argued for a more detailed picture of how power is exerted and have demonstrated the ways in which the so-called religious revival of Islam in Bazaar-Korgon was a locally rooted process – again both in space and time.

Far from being a foreign import, the increasing numbers of people practicing and showing interest in certain forms of scriptural Islam have been taught and guided by religious authorities who were largely trained during the Soviet period. Though the transmission and development of

religious knowledge was severely curbed during the Soviet era – to varying degrees and through varying means over its duration – it continued in a muted form; religious authorities engaged directly with the very real impact of Soviet ideology, Soviet institutions, and Soviet life on Muslim thought and practice. This combination of preservation and transformation, both occurring through strategic interactions with state power, brought about a very specific set of conceptions regarding Muslim life in the post-Soviet era that can neither be seen as a "reversion" or "revival" to pre-Soviet ideas nor as an import from foreign sources, though it shares notions with bodies of thought from the pre-Soviet era and from contemporary non-Central Asia. It is in this vein that I argue for the localness of the Central Asian religious revival- or why I choose to speak of the self-reflexive return of religious discourse and action to the public life of Bazaar-Korgon. It is a process that has been rooted in and enabled by local ideas, actors, institutions, and practices.

It is nonetheless a local process linked to, influenced by, and simultaneously creating "the global". Whether we consider the religious authorities long-term connection with legal, philosophical, and theological texts or more recent face-to-face interactions in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan for example, we see a history of connectedness. In the post-Soviet era, the institutional forms through which residents of the town have come to learn about textual interpretations of Islam and to seek guidance in proper conduct are consonant with local historical forms (the hujra) and simultaneously mirror contemporary international varieties (*davat*). The religious authorities who survived the purges of the 1920s and 1930s had been connected, in one way or another, to a local modernizing movement, the Jadids, that was based upon and linked to similar movements throughout the Muslim world of the late 19th and early 20th centuries[63]. Most of the Jadids did not survive, but questions of the modernization of Islam continued in another, highly different, manner – through the official religious hierarchy and their position as religious leaders within one of the original global movements – international socialism. The socialist movements of the late 19th and early 20th century cannot be easily compared to the state structures of the Soviet Union – in all its forms over its 70 year span. The point in noting this connection and the way the whole network of (official and unofficial) religious authorities were linked together and worked, in concert and contestation, to live out and conceive of Islam in that environment is to rethink how "the state," "the global," and "the local" have been interpreted in the literature on Central Asian religious authorities and religious knowledge in the Muslim Central Asia

[63] On Jadids see Khalid 1998.

Chapter 4

Listening to the Wedding Speaker: Discussing Religion and Culture

Introduction

Autumn 2003 was a particularly busy wedding season in Bazaar-Korgon, Kyrgyzstan. The fresh fruits and vegetables needed for wedding parties in the small Ferghana Valley town were plentiful and at the lowest prices of the year. Cash crops had just been harvested, the sale of which provided the funds needed to finance the weddings. The number of weddings was particularly high that year because Ramadan began at the end of October. No one would marry during the month of fasting, and not many wanted a winter wedding, so all the autumn weddings were crammed into September and October. It was easy to tell when there was a wedding nearby from the trumpeting of horns that marked the commencement and conclusion of various stages of the day's events. The rush to marry before Ramadan meant that the days and nights of September and October 2003 were filled with the cacophony of competing horns.

The climax of wedding celebrations in Bazaar-Korgon was the evening party. The celebration was typically held outside in the courtyard of the groom's parents' home. Party lights were strung about, interwoven in the grape vines hanging overhead. The courtyard was dominated by a head table covered with chocolate, alcohol and floral arrangements. The bride and groom, with their witnesses beside them, sat at the table. The bride wore a "European style" (*evromoda*) wedding dress, rented from a local shop. Her hair would have been carefully styled and perhaps even coloured with metallic-flecked spray; her make-up was most likely "professionally done". The bride's witness also wore her best dress and had done her hair and make-up in a similar fashion. The groom and his friend donned suits and Uzbek hats (*doppas*). Behind the party hung a large back-board colourfully painted with the words "Welcome" (*kosh kelingniz*) and bedecked with blinking lights.

Evening wedding parties nearly always included a DJ who played music and orchestrated the toasts, the exchange of gifts, and dances. Several tables would line the centre of the yard. Guests, generally friends of the bride and groom, sat at the tables and ate. During the festivities, members of the opposite sex watched and flirted with one another, guests consumed alcohol and the occasional

fight broke out. Gossip was circulated at these events. The evening wedding parties were among the most popular social events in town.

However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s some residents of Bazaar-Korgon began holding a different sort of wedding, one which either eliminated altogether the evening party described above or dramatically altered it. Organisers of these "new weddings" explained their alteration of the ceremony as a religiously motivated act. They claimed that the environment and structure of the "typical" wedding party, as well as the actions of guests, were inappropriate for Muslims. Thus, they sought to reform the weddings in order to make them more Islamic.

The new weddings took various forms, with the most basic version being one where the organisers excised the evening party, along with other supposed offending elements. Other organisers of the new weddings however, did not find it sufficient to simply cut the "non-Muslim" elements out of the celebration. In addition to eliminating these practices, they revamped several portions of the wedding ceremony, most notably the evening wedding party. At these events the music, dancing and alcohol were absent. The sexes were strictly segregated, and the bride was hidden away. There were often two head tables. The groom sat at one. At the other was the wedding speaker. The wedding speaker, an Islamic preacher typically from outside the community, was invited to the wedding to deliver a religious message which called the guests to observe more closely the way of Islam. The addition of the speaker turned the celebration into a decidedly religious event directed at transforming the beliefs and practices of the wedding guests.

The altered wedding parties presented a new, and very public, forum for sharing and acquiring religious information in the town. They thus became sites for learning about alternative interpretations of Islam and (possibly) exploring the lifestyle these interpretations implied. However, the evening wedding party was not universally embraced by the community. The ideas expressed in the religious message delivered at the evening party were contested by some. Moreover, the form in which the religious teachings were given was also disputed. Opponents argued that religion should be promoted during religious events and not during cultural rites of passage.

This chapter focuses on the reactions of community members to the new wedding parties. It suggests that while the responses to the parties were varied, patterns of response emerged along generational lines. Similarity of response appeared among age cohorts largely because of their shared ideas about religion and culture. The new weddings had become sites where these concepts and the boundaries between them were contested. Thus while for the young the wedding could more easily be a site of religious exploration, the middle-aged were more often confronted by the implicit and explicit ways the weddings challenged their ideas of religion and culture. Thus, they had more

reserved, and sometimes out-right hostile, opinions of the events. As Pelkmans argued in his discussion of religious change in Georgia, religious transformation was contingent on, and shaped by, historically rooted discourses of religion and nationality (2002: 251). Reactions to the new weddings in Bazaar-Korgon were likewise strongly related to internalised discourses concerning culture and religion that developed over the long Soviet period.

New Weddings

Weddings among Uzbeks in Bazaar-Korgon were lengthy affairs, with meals, exchanging of gifts, and the performance of many rituals before, during and after the wedding day. On the wedding day elaborate meals were prepared and nearly all members of the social networks of the respective families were invited to partake. The bride and groom typically participated in a civil ceremony. During this event they signed the necessary documents at the *raion* registration office and toured local sites of interest with friends and relatives of their age cohort, a process referred to as "*ZAGS*".[64] The couple also had a religious ceremony held at the bride's parents' home officiated by an imam or *moldo*.[65] In the evening, a large party, described in the introduction, was held at the groom's parents' home.

Though there was variation in the way the new weddings were held, they all aimed to eliminate the supposedly sinful elements of the "normal" weddings held in town, such as the drinking of alcohol, dancing, the mixing of the sexes and the public display of the bride. Many organisers of the new weddings accomplished this by completely eliminating the evening wedding party as it was the part of the wedding perceived to contain the most objectionable elements. In addition, many did away with the Western-style wedding dress as well as the ZAGS.

By eliminating the evening wedding party the organisers of these events eliminated the one aspect of the event that was most gender-integrated, thereby producing a wedding that was more strongly gender segregated. One of the strongest criticisms levelled at contemporary weddings was that men and women mixed together during the party. This was not only perceived as an offence in and of itself but it was thought that such an arrangement might lead to other sins. Since the other aspects of the wedding (i.e. the meals and the *nikoh*) were already highly gender segregated, the removal of the party quickly produced a ceremony celebrated in gender segregated spheres.

[64] The name for this event comes from the name of the registration office – *ZAGS* which stands for "The department for the registration of civil status".

[65] *Moldo* – a religiously knowledgeable man.

Moreover, the removal of the evening party eliminated the practice of displaying the bride, an aspect of the ceremony which also violated the gender norms propagated by the new wedding organisers.

Those participating in or adopting this style of wedding presented it as highly a religious event. Moreover, they portrayed the innovations as being introduced for religious reasons. A discussion of the terms used to refer to new weddings is illustrative. At the time of research, there was not a fully established way of referring to these new weddings in Bazaar-Korgon. When it was necessary to make a distinction between different sorts of wedding, one or two main adjectives was chosen for the purpose of describing which type of wedding it was. More precisely, an "average" wedding was never referred to as anything other than a "wedding" (*toi*). However, when the wedding was of the new variety adjectives were applied to the word wedding. The adjectives used, *sunnati* and *ibodat*, signified the overtly religious nature of the events and thus explicitly contrasted these weddings with others that, by implication, were not religious.[66]

A young woman explained "We call it a *Sunnati* Wedding (*sunnati toi*). Sunna means 'the things the prophet did'. In this type of wedding we try to honour the things the prophet said and did". She went on to say that other words could also be used to denote this type of wedding such as *ibodat*. She emphasised that because an *ibodat* wedding followed the ways of the prophet, it was, by implication a "correct" Muslim wedding. She further indicated that the bridal couple were also people who tried to live according to the prescriptions of the prophet Mohammad A young man, who himself had married in the new style of wedding was a bit more forthright with his comparison. "You've been around town, you've seen the way we have weddings? If I speak truthfully," he said "the weddings here in our town are not in accordance with our religion". That is why, he explained, he decided to have a *sunnati* wedding, a wedding "according to teachings of our prophet".

Transformations of wedding ceremonies in other settings have been interpreted as indicators of changes in economy (Yalçin-Heckmann 2001), gender roles and family structure (Tapper 1985) or broader shifts in culture (Kligman 1988: 24). The alteration of weddings in Bazaar-Korgon which simply cut the evening party could likewise be partly explained in economic terms. The costs of the evening wedding party represented a large percentage of the total expenditure for the set of events, rituals, and exchanges involved in Uzbek weddings. By excising it, those holding the most simple form of new weddings saved money while justifying the excision in moral and religious

[66] *Sunnat* (*Uzbek*)- 'Practices in Islam derived from the Prophet's teachings and habits'.
Ibodat (*Uzbek*) – Worship.

terms, rather than economic.[67] Likewise, an analysis of the ceremonies could be made in terms of altered gender roles.

However, even if the alteration of weddings which simply cut the evening party could be partly explained in these ways, it would be difficult to similarly interpret other varieties of the new wedding party. In these cases, wedding organisers transformed the parties into morally acceptable events where religious ideas were openly propagated. They removed the alcohol and the dancing and in their place invited an Islamic preacher to deliver a religious message to the wedding guests. The organisers played upon this semi-public nature in order to create a forum for the transmission of religious knowledge and for proselytization. Whatever else may have been involved, the organisers of these weddings made it clear that there was a religious intent underlying the event.

The wedding speaker

On a cold March evening in the outskirts of Bazaar-Korgon, guests made their way to the house where a new wedding party was to be held. They approached the courtyard surrounding the house in gender, and largely age, segregated groups. When they passed through the door the male guests entered the courtyard, milled around and talked to friends and acquaintances. Women made their way towards the main house where they passed behind large pieces of cloth that hung near the house and in front of the porch. Once behind the cloth the women were concealed from view. However, small holes in the material enabled women to sneak a look at those gathered in the yard. Tables and benches lined the inner area of the courtyard. In front was a platform with a low table.

The table was decked with food and drinks and behind it hung colourful tapestries and carpets. A few men sat at the table. The groom, hardly distinguishable from the other guests, walked up to the centre table and greeted the men, taking more time to talk with the man in his forties who sat in the middle. After a few minutes, the groom took his seat at his table nearby. The crowd grew silent and those not already seated crowded around, filling every available space in the yard and even spilling onto the street. The man at the centre of the head table took the microphone and began

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[67] However there is another reason why, in this case, I find economic interpretations less then satisfactory as a means for explaining these changes. While in some cases explaining economically motivated changes to rituals in religious terms might be an means of presenting a change made for unacceptable reasons (financial) in a more morally satisfactory manner (through religious discourses), the religious discourse used to explain the changes to wedding parties, as well as the interpretations of Islam to which they are attached, are not well-received in the Bazaar-Korgon. In fact I would wager that similar changes justified in explicitly economic terms would be more acceptable in the town then those explained through religious discourses.

to speak. He welcomed the guests and pronounced blessings for the groom and his new bride. He gave advice about how the new couple should live. He continued to talk. As time passed his voice grew louder and more impassioned, urging the listeners to follow the true path.

His voice waxed and waned, guiding the ear and the emotions of the listeners. He talked for more than 90 minutes. The wedding speaker focused his message on the primacy of prayer in a Muslim's life. He challenged the listeners by saying that all their good deeds, all their best intentions would not be counted if they did not pray.

> But this [heaven] is not a daydream…the place is promised by Allah. Thanks to what? Thanks to performing *namaz*. If *namaz* is not performed on time….if you fast during Ramadan, if your wealth has increased and you give alms (*zakat*), if your way is open and you go on *hajj*…if you help in the construction of a mosque, or if you give charity, in the end…the good deeds that are done by people, as Islam says, as our religion explains, as our parents show, if you do the good deeds, the benefits, the merits will not be written in your book until you perform *namaz*.

He emphasised the need to pray the full five times a day and to begin immediately. He directly challenged the notions that it was acceptable to save up the day's prayers and do them at the end of the day, or that the listeners could wait until their old-age to begin their prayers. He told them that Allah wanted the prayers of young, strong men. Again and again, he appealed to the shortness and unpredictability of life, urging the listeners to begin their duties now lest they be punished for their irresponsibility in the afterlife. He also emphasised that praying and good deeds must be augmented by the act of reminding others of their religious duties.

> Whether one is knowledgeable or not, whether old or young, no matter whom the person is, the task is given to each man and woman to call one another back to the right way. Thus […] if we intend to perform *namaz*, get ready for *namaz*, and get ready for goodness, we should call the people next to us to walk in Allah's, in God's religion. If you yourself don't smoke, don't drink, don't follow the bad way, but your fellow next to you is a drinker, or a smoker, or a thief […] it is your obligation to call the one next to you back from that way.

There was a small break in his talk and the guests were served *osh* (rice pilaf). Afterwards, the talk began again. When he finished young men came forward to ask questions. Others, including the women who sat hidden behind the tapestries and sheets, passed small pieces of paper forward with their inquiries.

The questions varied. One asked who implements the punishment for those who don't perform *namaz*. Another wanted to know about the legal schools of Islam and why there "had become so many". One man asked about marriage and how many wives are allowed. This led the wedding speaker into a discussion of gender roles, female dress and behaviour, men's obligations to the women in their family, and the correct conduct and meaning of a wedding. Though he did not discuss the idea of wedding speakers, he did explicitly condemn the practice of displaying the bride, noting that when a man takes a wife, she belongs to him and should not be paraded and shown to others. Another guest inquired whether it was right or wrong to celebrate *Noruz.*[68] Though the wedding speaker did not expressly forbid celebration of the holiday, he strongly advised against celebrating, noting that in the Shari'a the only holidays mentioned were the two *hayits*[69] and Fridays. He also indicated which elements in these annual celebrations were sinful and why they should be avoided.

There were also a number of questions regarding Hizb ut-Tahrir and Wahhabism which ultimately led to a heated debate between the wedding speaker and a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir who was present at the wedding. The discussion began with a debate over which legal school should be adhered to, whether a Muslim should adhere to only one school or could borrow from all, and ultimately whether the writings of the legal schools should be considered at all. A sharp disagreement on these points between the wedding speaker and the member of Hizb ut-Tahrir led to an argument over who was more knowledgeable about Islam and what type of knowledge was in fact important.

An analysis of the full message of this particular wedding speaker compared with the messages of other speakers would provide interesting and important insight into the types of Islamic ideas circulating in Bazaar-Korgon and how these (varying) ideas interact with one another.[70] This endeavour is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter. A short summary was provided in order to give an indication of the themes that are being addressed during these wedding parties. The wedding speaker's own message focused heavily on the necessity of the observance of religious

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[68] *Noruz* – a holiday local thought of as 'Muslim New Year'. It is celebrated on March 21st.

[69] *Hayit* – *Kurban Hayit* and *Roza Hayit* – the religious holidays commemorating: Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son (*Kurban*) and the end of Ramadan *(Roza)*

[70] A discussion of this would reveal an interesting duality concerning the weddings and the debate over orthodoxy (Asad 1986:15-16) I have argued in this chapter that the wedding is part of the debate over orthodoxy between those who adhere to scripturally oriented interpretations and those who do not (in essence those who are in fact largely 'secular'). However, the wedding is also a public space where debates over orthodoxy occur among Muslims who, by and large, all adhere to scripturally-oriented interpretations of Islam. This discussion would further reveal the complexity of religious belief in the community.

duties, with the performance of *namaz* as the foundational practice for a Muslim's life. He emphasised the need for Muslims to act, through prayer and by encouraging others to do the same, and not simply to assume that being born Muslim, and doing "good deeds", qualified one as a good Muslim. He explicitly criticised the notion that religion and religious practice was for the old and encouraged the young to engage in their religious duties. His emphasis on these issues speaks to what he saw as the major shortcomings of the Muslims in the area, namely the lack of religious observance in their lives. The questions asked by the attendees show what Muslims at the event were concerned with. Several questions explicitly sought to ascertain whether or not local practices which were presumed to be part of "Muslim life" were in fact in accordance with Islam (weddings, *Noruz*, marriage and its responsibilities). Together, the message and the questions show a preoccupation with the examination of widespread ideas about "proper" Muslim behaviour, the comparison of these ideas with the teachings of the Islamic texts, and the encouragement to live according to the "true" (i.e. the scriptural) way.[71] This "true" way in many cases meant that listeners should change their beliefs about Muslimness and Islam and re-align their lives to fit the "new" ideas. What they were being asked to leave behind were the customary beliefs that proper Muslim behaviour consisted, in essence, of the marking of life cycle events, the observance of "Muslim" holidays and religious devotion late in life.

Experiencing new weddings – first and second hand

The messages delivered by wedding speakers at the new evening parties provided an innovative way for residents of Bazaar-Korgon to learn about Islam and to explore alternative ways of being a Muslim. Moreover, the forum was a highly interactive and stimulating one. Wedding guests often commented on how exciting or appealing a certain speaker had been. In fact certain wedding speakers, like a teacher from Andijan, Uzbekistan named Kadirbek, had become locally famous.

Perhaps partly for this reason, the new evening wedding parties in Bazaar-Korgon were popular events, especially among the youth. This counter-intuitive situation becomes clearer when the new weddings are viewed in a broader context. Not everyone shared the opinion of the "new weddings" organisers that other forms of weddings were unacceptable. The majority of weddings in town were still held in the "typical" fashion which incorporated the evening party. Thus, the popularity of the new weddings, especially among the youth, did not necessarily indicate the

[71] The texts referred to in the wedding speaker's message were the Quran, Hadith, and writings from the Hanafi legal school.

endorsement of replacing a party with a religious event. Rather the weddings were popular because they were an additional element, and one that provided a place where people could encounter new ideas and explore their interest in Islam. At the same time, attending a new wedding did not necessitate acceptance (to whatever degree) of either the form of the wedding or the ideas being expounded at the event.

Although for some the wedding was an exciting site for exploration, for others it was far more challenging. As the example of the wedding speech given above illustrated, the messages entailed a fundamental rethinking of the essence of Islam and Muslimness. As a result, some residents of the town experienced the wedding as a challenge to their sense of themselves as Muslim. Opponents of the religious weddings claimed that the new parties were a deformation of "our culture" and an affront to "our way of life". This was especially true for middle-aged and elderly residents whose formative years were during the Soviet period and who had internalised Soviet notions of culture and religion. Whether or not these age cohorts had changed their religious practices or beliefs since the end of the socialist period, they nearly all experienced some form of negative reaction (to varying degrees) to the new weddings. A closer look at some of the residents of Bazaar-Korgon who came into contact with the new weddings – whether first or second hand – will illustrate the varied reactions the events provoked.

Exploring

Delfuza

Delfuza, a twenty year old girl, was studying *zaochnyi*[72] in her fourth year of University. She had been performing *namaz* for nearly two years, though with one considerable break. Several members of her immediate and extended family also prayed and were very involved in "learning more about Islam". Delfuza herself had also become interested in learning more and had regularly been listening to tape recordings of local Islamic leaders that her older sister passed on to her. She had begun to consider seriously taking up the *hijab* and had been talking to young women who wore that form of veil.[73]

[72] *Zaochnyi* is a Russian word and describes a program of 'distance learning.' A student is officially registered at a University but is allowed to study at home. Students are required to come at the end of each term to take there exams. Studying *Zaochnyi* is much cheaper than a regular course of study.

[73] I use the term *hijab* here to refer to the style of veiling in which a head scarf fully covers the hair and ears. It is fastened below the chin, fully covering the neck. The remainder of the scarf is draped over the shoulders. The term *hijab*, however, is rarely used by residents themselves. If it is, it is used to describe the overcoat-like covering worn by many Muslim women world-wide, rather than the style of veil.

Delfuza had been invited to a new wedding party in Bazaar-Korgon by a friend. She'd never been to one before, though she had heard about them quite extensively. She didn't know the bride or the groom and thus was a bit nervous about going. Nevertheless she was so eager to see the wedding for herself, and especially to hear the wedding speaker, the famous Kadirbek, that she decided to join her friend. Delfuza prepared for the evening. Had she been going to any other wedding, the preparation would have come as second nature. She would have chosen her most fashionable outfit, perhaps a skirt but maybe pants, carefully coiffed her hair and perhaps even applied a bit of make-up. But Delfuza found herself in a slightly uncertain position the afternoon of the wedding. She had no idea what to wear! She guessed that a long skirt and a long sleeved shirt would be in order, but what about her head? Unmarried girls her age did not wear headscarves. But considering the company she was going with (her friend had been wearing the *hijab* for the last year) and imagining what the event would be like, Delfuza took one of her mother's largest, and nicest scarves, draped it over her head and pinned it carefully under her chin.

A few days later when Delfuza related the events of the evening she was glowing with excitement over what she'd seen and heard. She said she had learned so much from Kadirbek about "How we (Muslims) are supposed to live". What was different about this event, she explained, was the variety of topics that were addressed. She said that when she listened to tapes or talked to others about Islam, there was usually one major theme discussed. But at the wedding people were allowed to ask the speaker a range of questions and thus she got to hear opinions about so many different topics. She thought that was very exciting and interesting. She also couldn't believe how many young people were there. "Before if there was some kind of religious teaching, only old people would go. But there were so many young people there [at the wedding party]". She said she was definitely going to go to another wedding like this, and would even consider having her own wedding in that fashion when the time came.

The highly gendered space of the wedding was also a new experience for Delfuza.[74] She commented that on a day to day basis she saw young men and talked to them. She also said that when she was in the bazaar it never bothered her when she saw men, even if they ran into her in the crowded rows of the market. At the wedding, however, she felt very different. At one point a man peeked around the curtain looking for someone. His gaze passed over Delfuza.

[74] Spaces and activities are often gendered in Bazaar-Korgon, with men at a party eating in one room and women in another. However, the wedding ceremony was different because of the curtain which prohibited the sexes from even seeing one another. In this way the practice of separation was heightened and the idea behind the practice somehow altered. Whereas in other contexts the separation can be read as 'men should eat/be with men' and 'women with women' here the implicit meaning was 'men and women should not be together nor see one another'.

> I bowed my head and lowered my eyes. I felt so embarrassed and ashamed to be seen by him. It was really strange. Then, after the wedding was over, we left the house, went out on the street, and men and women were mixing again. I didn't feel strange at all. But at the wedding, when that man looked at us, I did.

I asked her about her clothes, whether she had made the right decision about what to wear. She flushed, covered her mouth with her hands, and laughed a bit. "It was so shameful," she said. Apparently many young girls her age were there wearing normal dresses with only modest head covering or none at all. Even the women veiled in only the most normal fashion – a simple scarf over the head tied at the nape of the neck and often revealing hair. Luckily Delfuza only knew one or two of the girls at the wedding. Still, she was embarrassed. She guessed they'd be talking about her inconsistency in dress styles – jeans at the bazaar and *hijab* at wedding parties.

Sherzod

Sherzod was a seventeen-year-old boy whose family had a long history of living in Bazaar-Korgon. He was a high school student and the second of four children. His elder sister attended university in the provincial capital about 45 minutes away and his younger siblings lived at home with him, his parents and his maternal aunt. His father, Ibrahim, 56, had been a foreman at a local plant in town, but had resigned in the early 1990s after disagreements with the management. The plant, like most in the town, closed down not long afterwards. His father remained unemployed. The family subsisted on the produce of their garden, money received from relatives who rented their land outside of town, assistance from Ibrahim's older brother, and a small business they ran selling candy, snacks and school items (notebooks, pens, etc). Their business was successful because of its location – their house was adjacent to a large school.

Sherzod explained that he was very interested in Islam. When he was fourteen and fifteen he performed *namaz* but had stopped for a while; he said he wanted to begin again. Many of his friends were also interested in learning more about Islam and had been attending home-based study groups in town. He had been attending the mosque on Fridays for a while but had recently stopped because his father forbade him from going. In a separate discussion, his father had told me he thought prayer was fine, but his son should do it at home like he, and his father before him, had done. Ibrahim said he also wanted to protect his son from religious zealots, so-called Wahhabis, so he no longer allowed his son to attend the mosque. He was afraid of the kinds of things they would teach his son and ultimately he feared that his son would become one of them.

Sherzod had a good relationship with his father and respected him very much. He said he understood his father's reasoning as he himself was worried about "extremists". However, Sherzod felt confident that he could discern the difference between what was good and what was extreme. He said that some of his friends were interested in and involved with groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir but that he strongly disagreed with them. Thus, though he knew his father would object if he were aware of what Sherzod was doing, Sherzod often attended the new weddings with the express purpose of hearing the wedding speaker. For Sherzod, attending the new wedding party was a way to explore his interest in Islam while circumventing his father's injunctions against participation in religious events.

Like Delfuza, Sherzod was particularly drawn to the weddings when Kadirbek was speaking. "Whenever Kadirbek is speaking, we always go," Sherzod remarked. "My friends and I always listen for news about when he will be in town". Sherzod said he knew that some people, like his father, may perceive Kadirbek as one of the "extremists", but Sherzod thought they were wrong. Kadirbek, he said, was just teaching "real Islam". For Sherzod, the wedding was one of the few chances he had of hearing religious messages and participating in religious life.

Rejecting

Bakit and Nurlan

Nurlan, a school teacher in his early 50s, threw a party to celebrate his birthday. There had been a "new wedding" not long before Nurlan's birthday party and during the evening he and one of his close friends, Bakit, began discussing the wedding. Bakit, also in his early 50s, opposed the new wedding parties. He referred to the messages being taught as "propaganda". From other interviews I had conducted with Bakit and his family I learned that Bakit was not opposed to all the ideas espoused by those holding or the new wedding parties or preaching at them. For example, Bakit was against veiling for women but valued prayer. He did not perform *namaz* himself but his wife had recently begun and his daughter had prayed and studied Arabic for several years at their neighbourhood mosque. Bakit's difficulty with the ideas being taught by people like the wedding speaker was their claim that the practices were mandatory for all Muslims and that these practices were defined as "proper" Muslim behaviour. Bakit viewed the teaching at the weddings, which again he labelled "propaganda", as a form of coercion.

But, despite his criticism of the content of the messages delivered at the weddings, Bakit's discussion with Nurlan focused on the form of the wedding, which he said was the biggest problem with it. "A wedding is not the proper forum for the spreading of propaganda," he said. "He [the

wedding speaker] is trying to do away with Kyrgyz and Uzbek wedding traditions. Tradition is one thing and religion another. Why should he try to do away with our tradition?" Bakit took issue with the fact that a cultural practice had been transformed into a religious event. He felt that religious propaganda should be disseminated at a religious event – not a cultural one. In his view, the two were, and should remain, separate. At the same time, he saw the transformation as an attack on his, and Uzbek culture.

Nurlan, on the other hand, was largely concerned with the content of the wedding. He immediately accused the speaker of being a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bakit tried to correct his friend's misunderstanding by explaining that in fact the particular speaker who gave the message at the wedding in question was a Wahhabi and that the two were different things. Nurlan was not interested in such a fine distinction. He said that he was certain that in any case the man was an extremist and dangerous and thus the new wedding party was a bad idea.

Doubting

Zeba

Zeba was a 55-year-old school teacher who had been performing *namaz* and fasting during Ramadan for ten years. She began in 1994 when her husband died, though she says this was not the reason she began. She had long wanted to pray, she said "But you know, such things were not allowed [during the Soviet Period]". She was considered a devout and religious woman by many of her neighbours and colleagues, though she would hardly label herself as such. What she did like to see herself as was a very open-minded, educated woman. She encouraged her children to be the same and gave them considerable freedom in a society dominated by the control of elders. One of her daughters had chosen to wear the *hijab*. Another routinely wore pants, make-up and a baseball cap. She found both routes valuable and acceptable. She had never been to a new wedding, though some of her children had. This is how she learned about the weddings.

When I talked to her about the evening parties, she said it was good that people had a chance to learn about Islam. She thought the forum for asking questions was particularly "great". She herself often had many questions and regularly read books about Islam. As a school teacher, and the daughter of a history professor, she was very supportive of the pursuit of knowledge and she found the pursuit of religious knowledge to be of even greater worth. So at first she endorsed the weddings. However, as her daughters told her more about the wedding in detail she began to wonder about the ideas being presented.

Some of the teachings of the wedding speaker seemed odd to her. When certain practices were deemed un-Islamic and the wedding guests were told not to participate in them (e.g. the discussion of *Noruz* in the wedding message presented in this chapter), Zeba was a bit nonplussed. She wondered why someone would consider such practices "un-Islamic". "They are Uzbek traditions," she said.

Reflections

The new weddings organised in Bazaar Korgon were a means for transmitting alternative ideas of Islam in the community. As such, for those who were interested they provided a site for learning about, and exploring, certain religious interpretations. But not everyone in the community found the events, or the alternative ideas, so exciting. Nor were all so willing to explore new notions of Islam and Muslimness. The weddings thus provoked a variety of reactions.

The youth saw the events as a way to learn more about Islam. The weddings were a forum where the young could seek direct advice on matters of personal conduct. The events were also exciting and stimulating. They offered a chance to interact with others who were also "interested in religion". In addition, the large number of youth at the event confirmed that interest and involvement in religion was no longer just for the old. If their parents disagreed with their burgeoning interests, the sight of others of a like-mind helped bolster their confidence in their belief and interests. Moreover, as the example of Sherzod demonstrated, the weddings provided a way for the young to pursue their interest in religion even when their parents disagreed.

The evening wedding party was also a way for the guests to explore certain Islamic teachings and modes of living without having to necessarily accept them. Delfuza's experiences were particularly telling. In wearing the *hijab* and experiencing more complete forms of gender segregation than what she was used to, she got a small glimpse of what "other" Muslims' lives might be like. At the same time, her experiences did not involve any kind of commitment. This was partly because there was no face-to-face involvement between the wedding speaker and the guests. Moreover, because attendance at the event was open, some guests came to the event knowing few or none of the others present, as was the case with Delfuza. This meant there may have been little pressure to follow the teachings. This absence of pressure to commit stands in contrast to the other main forum for Islamic education in town – the small home-based study groups. Here small groups led by a teacher formed tight units. In these groups a larger amount of religious and social coercion could be placed on members to conform to the teachings of the group.

Attending an evening wedding party was largely commitment free. There was no requirement to "come again" and the lack of membership in a specified social group gave attendees freedom from social pressure. This was not so different from the kind of learning experienced by listening to cassettes. However, as Delfuza noted, one of the attractions of the evening party was its interactive nature, where guests could ask their questions to the speaker. Attendees received guidance about matters of everyday life – cross gender relations, dress codes, morality, etc. Moreover, it was a "live" event with an exciting atmosphere. It was no coincidence that Delfuza and Sherzod were both drawn not only to the new type of wedding itself, but also to the particular speaker, Kadirbek. The role of a charismatic teacher should not be underestimated in evaluating the attraction of these events for the youth.

It is interesting to note that the youth never discussed the fact that the messages were being delivered at a *wedding*. The use of this type of event to deliver a religious message seemed unimportant. What was important to them was simply the chance to hear the message and ask their questions. Only when Delfuza remarked that she might consider having such a wedding herself when she got married, was the form of the event explicitly discussed. Even then, Delfuza did not give a good indication as to why she would like to have a "new wedding" other than the fact that she had liked the one she had attended so much.

For other community members, largely middle-aged and elderly residents, the new evening wedding parties were more threatening than inspiring. Many, like Nurlan and Ibrahim, were against the teachings propagated at the events. In line with the general views on excessive religiosity that people held during the Soviet period, they saw the high degree of religious observance of those involved in the weddings as "bad" and a marker of "extremism". Moreover they disagreed with the admonishments of the speakers, claiming that it simply was not necessary to comply with their teachings in order to be a good Muslim.

The teachings of the wedding speaker represented alternative interpretations of Islam that were gaining currency in the town and thus that threatened customary ways of living Islam. Though people like Nurlan and Ibrahim may have genuinely been frightened of some nebulous threat supposedly posed by "extremists" and "Wahhabis", the more salient threat they felt may have been to their sense of self and way of life. Ibrahim emphasised that his son would do well to adhere to the manner of religious piety practiced by himself and his father. He attempted to shield his son from influences that may have led him down a different religious path, breaking with the custom and practice of his own family.

Bakit's reactions to the new wedding party, though at times directed at larger, abstract notions like "culture" and "religion", were grounded in similar premises to those of Ibrahim in that Bakit

criticised a perceived attack on his "way of life". His criticism that the wedding organisers were mixing "culture" and "religion" in one respect seems odd since it has been argued that Central Asian Muslims largely saw the two notions as coterminous. However in the Central Asian context it is important to remember that Muslim culture had been folklorized and limited to those aspects of Muslim religious life related to the home and life-cycle events. Creed argued that "the socialist emphasis on folklore enhanced the affiliation between ritual and national identity". (2002: 70). In Central Asia weddings, as rituals, were canonised as part of national "Muslim" identity. Thus, though they were definitely perceived as Muslim, this was nonetheless a category largely seen as "cultural", rather than "religious". Other components of Muslim life, such as prayer, religious study, veiling and the propagation of religious ideas, had been objectified as the "religious" part of Islam and had been designated as the activities of the old or the extremely, even fanatically, religious. Thus while Bakit definitely viewed weddings as part of his Muslim culture, he did not see them as explicitly "religious" events. By contrast, he perceived the messages delivered at the new weddings as unmistakably religious and therefore out of place.

The religious life espoused by the wedding speaker was clearly threatening to Bakit, Nurlan and Ibrahim because of its attack on their way of life and their understandings of proper Muslim behaviour. Tapper argued that changes in wedding ceremonies in a Turkish town were linked to the way that "townspeople used[d] wedding ceremonials to create and reflect social status and personal identity" (1991: 143). In Bazaar-Korgon however, the changes in wedding parties in Bazaar-Korgon reflected, created, and were read as shifts in religious identification and a critique of local cultural practices and discourses. The new weddings themselves, at least for Bakit and Nurlan, were direct proof of the threat posed by "new" interpretations of Islam; they were concrete examples of how these interpretations would undermine the most basic institutions of their culture. And while Creed observed in Bulgaria that the "depoliticization of culture may have contributed to ritual's declining appeal or political utility," in the Central Asian case – where ethno-national/religious culture remained highly politicized, especially in light of the threats posed to it by varying articulations of Muslimness[75]- ritual remained important as a field where this contest played out.[76]

A simple analysis of the reactions presented might reveal that those "interested" in Islam or those who practiced Islam in a way closer to the mode endorsed by the wedding speaker were the people who supported the event, while others were more sceptical or antagonistic. Yet the reaction of Zeba highlights the fact that this easy dichotomy does not completely hold. A woman esteemed

[75] See also Hilgers 2006, Rasanayagam 2006c.

[76] Christian groups' creation and use of rituals further heightened the post-Soviet politicization of culture. On this point see Pelkmans 2007.

for her religious piety, she endorsed the event as a legitimate means to learn about Islam. Moreover she generally supported the preaching of the wedding speakers. Nevertheless, she found some of their teachings quite odd, especially when they criticised certain cultural practices she valued as Islamic. Her ambiguous position reveals that while she belonged with those "interested" in religion and who saw the weddings as a means to learn and explore, she also shared ideas with those who found the new wedding parties troubling and threatening to an established way of life.

Thus, reactions to the weddings often had as much to do with understandings of the category "religion" as it did with opinions about certain interpretations of Islam and the practices prescribed by these interpretations. A pattern that emerges is that those who criticised the new weddings tended to be of the same age cohort. Zeba was intrigued by and supportive of the weddings for many of the same reasons as the young. But where she differed from them and fell more in line with her contemporaries was in her reaction to the implied renegotiation of the concepts of religion and culture. Regardless of the fact that she differed from her peers in her own religious devotion, she felt the same tension they did when it came to negotiating the boundaries of culture and religion. Zeba, like her peers, had grown up in the Soviet period and her ideas regarding these concepts were shaped by Soviet religious and cultural politics. In her work on consumption in Russia, Humphrey likewise noted that differences in attitudes and ideas were directly linked to age, and thus attachment to Soviet ideals. "…the extreme compression of historical changes into a few years has polarised the population; this has occurred most notably by generation, separating those people whose attitudes were formed by the Soviet regime from those who came to adulthood after . . . the mid-1980s" (2002: 41).

The sharing of these Soviet ideals, in essence the internalization and appropriation of these discourses, had a profound effect on how residents in the community reacted to the new wedding parties. In addition to these shared Soviet ideals, certain age cohorts also similarly experienced the weddings as an implicit threat to their way of life and perhaps ultimately the legitimacy of their control of and authority over their children and community. That is why, despite variation in religious belief in practice, patterns of response to the new wedding parties fell (generally) along generational lines.

Chapter 5

Constructing Mosques, Building Modernities

Introduction

In the telephone office an operator sits behind a switch board plugging and unplugging color coded wires. Discarded theater seats lining the walls of the dark room, not bolted to the floor of their new location, creak and rock with the weight of a new occupant. The operator shouts a number. A man jumps up, runs to a cubicle, picks up a phone. "HELLO! HELLO!" he cries, straining to hear a muffled voice through the cracks and pops of an old line. Others in the office wait for a numerical code scrawled on the back-side of old Soviet paperwork. In possession of the code, the bearer walks home, ten, twenty, even 40 minutes away. She dials the operator and recites the number to prove she has paid to call outside of town. After the single call is exhausted, the procedure begins again. To avoid the time consuming process those who have the resources pay a higher subscription rate and get a "line out of town". However, even after the "open-line" has been bought there is no guarantee that the telephone service will be in operation; the whole system regularly goes out.[77]

In Bazaar-Korgon, the surest way to spread information is by word of mouth; the word travels amazingly fast. Despite the seemingly large number of inhabitants, the town functions in many ways like a village. Perhaps it is better to see it as a series of small neighborhood-based communities which are linked together through a dense web of social relationships. These ties are important for social stability, support and control. They also function as a communication center which spreads information quickly and efficiently across town – from the oldest areas on the hill to the newest part, called Sai. Even though they say they get all the gossip, residents of Sai complain that their neighborhoods don't have the solidarity of those in the old town. A young woman of 26, born and raised in Sai, married into a family from an old neighborhood an hours walk from her natal home. We had lunch together one afternoon at her parents' home and she discussed the differences between her two neighborhoods. She said that neighbors in the old

[77] In September, 2003 the then dominant Kyrgyz mobile phone Company – Mobi-Card – opened a cell over Bazaar-Korgon. However, with so few able to afford the phone and the costs of calls, its affects on communication in the community were imperceptible.

section of town helped one another. She described how they gave, lent, and traded produce from their gardens with one another to avoid the long trip to the bazaar. It was a contrast with her own neighborhood, she said, where she hardly talked to more than a handful of neighbors and people rarely helped each other in that way. She encouraged me to visit her in her new home, to see the differences for myself. The woman was perhaps overstating her case, trying to create an air of desirability about her new marital home. Her frequent visits to her parent's home and the stories her younger sister told me revealed her unhappiness in her new situation. Nevertheless her basic point coincided with similar, if more tempered stories which indicated that the social cohesion of residents living in Sai was not as strong as it was in other areas of town.

Despite this felt lack of cooperation, in the early 2000s a group of residents of the Sai apartment buildings decided that a neighborhood mosque should be constructed in their area and organized themselves to this end. With the help of religious and secular authorities in local, regional, national, and international arenas in the summer of 2004, construction began on their mosque – the 28th to be built in town. As it neared completion, it became apparent that residents had constructed more than a building. The construction project helped build community cohesion; it also initiated a new vision of social action – one that was simultaneously self-consciously religiously motivated and seen as [?] a step to modernity. It is not that the mosque – as a building – provided a venue for political discussions, a meeting place for to organization of collective action, or a spot for the dissemination of information. Rather it was the processes of its construction that created new venues for solidarity. The construction process also generated new spaces for public expression and action with a religious texture in the vein of Eickelman's and Salvatore's Muslim publics (2004). Exploring the construction of the mosque shows the complex ways in which various groups, governmental agencies, elites, and other individuals work together or against one another to build these new types of public spaces.

Yet this creation of public space was done in an environment where gossip about, and suspicion of, Muslim extremism was rampant and where Muslims who acted religiously in public were, if not rejected, certainly eyed apprehensively. Moreover, discourses regarding the "nefarious nature" of foreign Muslims and their interpretations of Islam were deployed in the town as means of invalidating "deviations" from widespread, communally-held notions of Islam and Muslimness. Ironically, the construction of the mosque in Sai was an actual incidence of connection with foreign Muslims; the project was financed by an international Muslim NGO. Nevertheless the project was well received in the neighborhood and in the wider community. This chapter, in addition to mapping the types of space that were created – and the manner in which they were constructed – also explains why this project succeeded, arguing that its

accomplishment was partly due to its perceived regulation by secular authorities. This regulation, for residents, signaled the propriety of the actors and project in which they were engaged.

The construction of the mosque was exactly that – construction – a symbol which, consonant with Soviet and post-Soviet Western visions represented progress and modernity and which, despite the religious function of the edifice, was approbated especially in light of the general post-Soviet decay. Importantly, the religious function of the mosque did not hinder its acceptance in the community. Rather it was unproblematic as it represented townspeople's reconnection with their perceived "lost" Muslim past, in a way that was not considered "extreme" religious behaviour. The mosque construction project represents the multi-vocal landscape of the town in which competing visions of Muslimness, modernity, and social action coalesce and compete to form a newly textured public life.

A strong component of all modern nation-states has been what Asad has called the political project of secularism in which state structures have attempted to "construct categories of the secular and the religious in terms of which modern living is required to take place" (2003). In previous chapters I established what the contours of these categories were in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, as well as how they were formed and altered during the changing political and economic environments of the Soviet and post-Soviet era. In this chapter I show how these categories function, determining the acceptability of the mosque construction project. But I also argue, following Salvatore (2006), for a more tempered articulation of Asad's rather pessimistic views about the possibilities for religious action in spaces regulated by secular institutions. The construction of the mosque in Bazaar-Korgon demonstrates that there are possibilities for imagining and enacting a "religious modern" within theses secular arenas.

Connecting Histories of Socialist Modernity

Ruslan, a mason in his 50s, remembers the 1970s as an exciting time. He and many others of his age cohort had just finished their training in masonry, wiring, building design, and general construction. They had been charged with the task of creating a new Soviet town. As many remember it, the mid-1970s was when Bazaar-Korgon started to come into its own. At that time, it had been decided that Leninskii *Raion* would be split in two. The eastern half took the name of the town which became its administrative center: Bazaar-Korgon. Government offices, a House of Culture (*Dom Kultura*) and a series of other edifices were erected to house the various administrative departments needed to run the district. The Sai River which formed the northern

border of the town was channeled, creating a new strip of usable land. In this area, apartment blocks were constructed for the workers brought into the district to run the *raion*. The approximately 300 apartments were the most prestigious places to live in the eighties. They had indoor plumbing, electricity, and good heating; they were given to the administrators, doctors, teachers, and officials of the district government.

Ruslan was not among the new arrivals. His paternal family had a long history of living in Bazaar-Korgon. But, as he recounted, he was nonetheless excited to be involved in the construction of the new socialist town. He said he felt as if they were really working towards something. Though the focus was on the development of the new areas of town, the older parts were also included in the modernization projects. As the seventies closed and the eighties opened, water mains were laid throughout the town and spigots were installed at the end of every street, bringing potable water reasonably close to nearly every home. New roads were built and others were paved. A second statue of Lenin was erected in the new town square on the new main street. Many residents remember the period as the moment when Bazaar-Korgon began to develop. Of course they had seen the development of other, larger urban areas – Jalal-Abad, the provincial capital was only 30 minutes away by bus, and Andijan (in the Uzbek SSR) or Osh (in the Kyrgyz SSR) not more than two to three hours away. These places had seen the fruits of Soviet infrastructure much earlier. Bazaar-Korgon had to wait a bit, but it too had its moment of glory. It was, according to its residents, well on its way to becoming a "modern" place.

The political project of modernization was perhaps nowhere as strongly felt as in the Soviet Union where, over the span of seventy years, political leaders and citizens together were engaged in a deliberate and energetic attempt to create socialist modernity (see Kotkin 1995 for the Stalinist era). In the early years, Central Soviet authorities forcibly sedentarized nomadic populations and introduced new forms of agricultural production. The reorientation of Central Asian agricultural production to cash crops during the mid-Soviet period meant a transformation of the ecological environment through massive irrigation schemes which eventually almost completely emptied the Aral Sea (Rumer 1990). Late Soviet era transformations affected small communities like Bazaar-Korgon with the provision of infrastructure for everyday conveniences like running water, telephone, and electricity. New political structures massively politicized and bureaucratized everyday life.

Within all of these projects was the self-conscious ethos that all citizens of the Union were working together to build a society that would stand not only in contrast to Western modernity but would surpass it, attaining the highest level of modernity in social evolution. Certainly one can not take Soviet ideology as representative of Soviet reality. An ideology touted is not

necessarily one believed. However, the USSR was an ideologically saturated society and, as Kotkin argues for the Stalinist era, its ideology *did* inspire people (1995: 235 - 236). More practically "Learning to speak Bolshevik", as Kotkin termed it, was necessary to live and work in the system; it was a part of new forms of social identification that were promoted – through positive and negative integration – by the state (*ibid*: 236). Though the nature of power – and modernization itself – fluctuated of the course of the Soviet period, the coercive capability of the state was impressive (though not admirable).

Despite this, Western modernization theories during the Cold War, when classical modernization theory was at its height, wavered in their analyses of the Soviet Union. Labeled "the second world", its lack of democracy and capitalism precluded its incorporation into the club of the fully modern. Nevertheless, it certainly couldn't be understood in the same terms as the newly post-colonial third world. According to Johan Arnason those social theorists who considered the "modern" qualities of the USSR either interpreted it similarly to Talcott Parsons – who saw the Soviet experience as a historically contingent path that would ultimately result in a breakthrough to full Western modernity – or in the vein of Jürgen Habermas whose structural approach classified the USSR as a second, alternative vision of modernity, but hardly took into consideration the specific Soviet features (1993: 5 - 6; see also 2001: 88 - 89 note 3). Despite these inquiries, Cold War scholarship on the region focused more intently on strategic issues, the question of modernity in the USSR falling largely to the wayside.

For most social and political theorists working within the framework of classical modernization theory, the demise of the USSR barred the need to pursue the line of inquiry farther. The collapse of the Soviet Union came at a moment when anthropology was beginning to revisit modernity as a theoretical concept and a field of inquiry – prompting the anthropological literature on alternative or multiple modernities. Even if anthropologist of the former socialist world never took up the discourse and frameworks of this body of literature – with the exception of Lisa Rofel (1999) who, working on Socialist China, was one of the forerunners in this vein of inquiry – they nonetheless took the modernizing regimes of the Socialist era seriously and their work, especially that which focused on "development" and " transition" did provide powerful insight into experiences of Socialist modernity, its decline, and the rise of an alternative modernity – a U.S. led, market variant (see Pine and Bridger 1998, Wedel 2001) One of the startling facts that this literature revealed was that opinions of socialist citizens, like those of Ruslan and his fellow Bazaar-Korgonians, who saw themselves as fully modern were often ignored by academics and development practitioners of the post-Soviet period (Creed and Wedel 1997).

On the one hand these studies challenge us to take seriously the opinions, dreams, and disenchantments of former socialist citizens. On the other they force us to ask if there isn't something more to the claims of our informants than just the expression of desires. What can ethnographic analysis reveal if we think of the Soviet Union as modern? In this vein Verdery explicitly called for a re-conceptualization of post-socialist studies as post-Cold War studies in order to cast a broader net that "would afford us a very broad field for asking about the multiple technologies […] through which modernity in its many guises – fascist, socialist and capitalist – was produced" (Verdery 2002: 20). And while Kandiyoti has rightly cautioned against overemphasizing similarities between the modernization programs of the USSR and those of Western colonial powers, her work demonstrated the value in thinking in terms of Socialist versions of modernity (2000: 52 - 62). The contemporary religious landscape of Bazaar-Korgon is only comprehensible through these lenses – the contours and success of the mosque project even more so. To understand its success and to see the innovation in the kind of social action its construction created, it is essential to comprehend the town's long experience with modernity and the way it shaped not only material landscapes but ideological ones as well.

Socialist decay and the post-socialist "religious revival"

Whatever level of modernity residents of Bazaar-Korgon may have felt they achieved by the early 1980s – in the structural improvement of their town or in the increased literacy rates – they noted that the "progress" which had been made began to erode all too quickly. Just a bit more than a decade after the infrastructural improvements in town took place, the Soviet Union dissolved and the infrastructure began to erode. By 2003, the prestigious apartments had become the least desirable accommodations in town. The water regularly went out for long periods of time. People carried buckets of water from spigots a ten minute walk away. Public outhouses had been built near the apartments to deal with the frequent water outages. Some residents on the ground floor had annexed the open land behind their homes. They kept animals and built private outhouses. Anyone living in the apartments who could afford to move out, and was still able to find land at a reasonable distance from the center of town, did so.

The demographics of the area had also begun to change. A significant number of the highly educated Kyrgyz who were employed in government offices, hospitals and schools, had moved out. Those moving in were Uzbeks from town who were often in difficult economic circumstances, or separated from their social networks, and Kyrgyz who had relocated from the

villages of the *raion* after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They'd come, by and large, to find work in the bazaar. Another feature of Soviet modernization also began to visible erode at this time: secularism. At the turn of the millennium, Bazaar-Korgon had become known throughout Kyrgyzstan as a "religious place". For residents of the town, as has already been noted, the indicators of this religious turn were the increasing numbers of men and boys attending the mosques; the rising numbers of women wearing headscarves that more fully covered the head, neck, and upper body than those worn by the majority of women; the popularity of home-based study groups (*davat*), and the public appearance of men inviting residents to come closer to Islam (*davat*). This litany of evidence regularly cited by townspeople, while important for establishing changes in the religious landscape, also provides insight into local conceptions of religiosity. Whereas outsiders generally cite the number of mosques as proof of increased public religiosity, in local residents' accounts the construction of mosques seemed uncontroversial, and was never highlighted in discussions about the changing role of religion in public life. This change of physical landscape somehow fell outside of their evaluation of the town's religiosity.

After the Soviet Union collapsed, there were two periods of mosque building – the boom of the early 1990s and the smattering of construction of the early 2000s. The earlier date is easy to interpret. While some mosques were built at the end of the Soviet period when rules on religion were relaxed, the fear that policy would again change precluded a construction boom. In the town of Bazaar-Korgon, five new mosques were opened between 1987 and 1990. But when the Union collapsed in 1991, the fear was completely removed. Fourteen of Bazaar-Korgon's 28 mosques were built from 1991 - 1995. This period of construction coincides with many residents' feelings about a sharp increase in religious practice just after the collapse of the Soviet period. While many Central Asians may not have welcomed the end of the USSR, once faced with the reality of it, they did embrace certain opportunities this dissolution brought, one of which was to "reconnect" with a perceived lost Muslim past. As described in chapter two, Central Asians understandings of Muslimness may have been profoundly changed over the Soviet period, but the notion that they were Muslims and that they had been prevented from practicing Islam or being the kind of Muslims they were prior to the Soviet era, persisted. In the early post-Soviet era there was a strong desire to connect to this pre-Soviet past and to throw off perceived unsavory elements of Soviet political control – like the limitations on religious expression. One of the most immediate and widespread ways these desires were manifested in Bazaar-Korgon (as among other Muslim populations of the former Soviet Union) was in mosque construction.

One contributing factor to the massive growth in the number of mosques surely was the relative ease at gaining funds for these kinds of projects. International Muslim NGOs, private

Muslim donors from outside the former Soviet Union, and even governments from Muslim majority societies saw mosque construction – along with the distribution of religious materials like Qurans – as one of the main avenues for assisting "post-Soviet Muslims" in re-connecting to their faith. Another facilitating factor was that for Bazaar-Korgonians, the buildings served as symbols of Muslim attachment while their construction did not necessitate any personal commitment or religious transformation. Moreover, their construction was a way of turning back the clock so to speak – of undoing what those involved in early anti-religious campaigns of the Soviet period had done – without challenging certain trumpeted values of the late Soviet era. While mosques had been closed during the anti-religious campaigns, there was not a concomitant negative stereotyping of the buildings as such. In fact, the *SADUM* promoted mosques as the center of legitimate religious life (Saroyan 1997: 70 - 71). While Soviet buildings such as the *dom kultura* were created as new loci for social life, they were not presented as direct replacements to the closed mosques. Veiled women in the post-Soviet era, in contrast, could not similarly been viewed as a benign return to the past. Over the course of the Soviet period, the veil had become a symbol not only of backwardness but of religious extremism (see chapter two and seven). Moreover, the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women were presented as cures to the ills that the veil represented. A veil could not be worn in the post-Soviet years without confronting these notions.

If the early boom period in mosque construction seems to confirm the stilted idea that the end of the USSR allowed religion to simply re-appear, and if the argument that what "appeared" in 1991 differed significantly from what had "disappeared" in the 1930s is not enough to challenge us to look at long-term processes for interpreting contemporary landscapes, then what happened after 1995 should. While there were fourteen mosques opened from 1991 until 1995 there were no mosques opened from 1995 until 1999. Moreover, this period was also hallmarked by a decline in the keeping of religious observances, like regular prayer, that started after the collapse of the USSR. According to one informant, a middle aged businesswoman, the sudden increase in religious observance was a fad and for some, a way to legitimate or access new power. But, she explained, like all fads, this one too faded. A second, smaller "resurgence" of religion took longer to make its appearance. It was not until the early years of 2000 that these religious transformations became apparent.

For example in a survey of 50 households I conducted in 2004 showed that of those who began praying in 1990 or later, the majority had started after 1998. This observation coincided with the second phase of mosque construction. No mosques were opened in the town from 1995 until 1999. From 1999 until 2004 two mosques were opened, and at least one other was proposed;

funding had yet to be found. A madrasa was scheduled to open in autumn 2004. [78] Importantly, the madrasa already had students waiting to attend and the mosques were still well frequented by 2004, something that con not be similarly said for the majority of mosques built elsewhere in Kyrgyzstan since the collapse of the union.[79]

It seems that the sort of practices that accompany long-term religious change in individuals and small social groups – teaching, study, working through social tensions, bodily disciplining, institutional construction, to name a few – take time to grow and spread before their impact on society is felt. In other words, while the early boom of mosque construction and participation in certain rituals may have been a fad, the signs of religiosity that residents of Bazaar-Korgon recognized by the early 2000s indicated slower, but more permanent alterations in belief and practice. Dramatic changes in governance, like the collapse of the Union, allowed for expressions of religious rituals, affiliation, or other religiously motivated acts – like mosque construction – outside the home, in view of all, in short "public", in one reading of the word. But these religious transformations became public in another way as well because some of them, like the construction of the 28th mosque, were not only expressions of religious affiliation, devotion, or obedience, but new forms of collective social action as well.

Making connections, building mosques, constructing solidarity

In 2004, the only mosque within a reasonable walking distance of the Sai apartments was the Friday mosque of the entire *raion* – the largest mosque in the area. Residents of the apartments recounted that in the early 1990s an apartment had been used as a mosque, but it closed after a couple of years. The demographics of the area may give some clues as to why such a populated area lacked the kind of neighborhood mosque used by men for daily prayers. In the Soviet and initial post-Soviet period, the inhabitants of the apartment buildings, were the most integrated in the Soviet system, the most removed from familial networks, and the most supportive of official party lines. In short, they were the least inclined to religious belief and observance. However, following independence, the demographics changed. Though a portion of the original inhabitants

78 The madrasa was open to men who had already completed secondary school and wished to pursue religious education. The *Raion* Head Imam, who oversaw the project, indicated that other subjects like computers and English would be taught as well.

[79] In the North many of the newly-opened mosques remained largely empty, although in Bishkek this was not the case.

remained, new residents moved in, creating a more diversified population and one that was less dismissive of religion.

In the early 2000s, a sizable number of residents had become interested in constructing a mosque in the area. Throughout Bazaar-Korgon, neighborhoods often had small neighborhood committees to deal with collective issues and to mediate between the neighborhood and civic authorities. In this case, the neighborhood asked its neighborhood committee (*mahalla komitet*) leader to discuss the issue of a new mosque with the *Raion* Head Imam, Toktosun, an Uzbek. He approved of the idea and together he and the *mahalla komitet* began to pursue the project. The *mahalla komitet* first approached the town government to get permission to use vacant land in the middle of the apartment complexes and behind the largest Kyrgyz school in the town.[80] The town government agreed, granting the deed to the community without payment, on condition that a few years later they would begin to pay for the property. Toktosun's job was to help the community find a "sponsor" (*sponsor)* for the project. It was one of three projects he was seeking financial assistance for at the same time. Another community was also interested in a mosque and Toktosun, along with the imams of the *raion*, were renovating the old mosque complex built in the early 20th century. They planned to open a madrasa on its premises in the fall of 2004.

When the community of Sai petitioned Toktosun to help them build a mosque, he sought the opinion and assistance of Tekebaev, Bazaar-Korgon's representative in parliament.[81] Tekebaev was not able to provide any financial assistance but he did connect Toktosun with Icabek, a former Bazaar-Korgonian. Icabek Aldozob, a Kyrgyz man in his 50s was originally from a small village in Bazaar-Korgon *Raion*. He had been the director of Bazaar-Korgon's House of Culture (*dom cultura*) in the late Soviet period and lived in the *Sai* apartments until 1996 when he moved to the capital of Kyrgyzstan. He'd found work in Bishkek, through his childhood friend, Tekebaev.

In 2002, Icabek had begun praying namaz and had quit drinking alcohol. He started to take Islam more seriously, he said. As argued in chapter two, the majority of the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon were those who, during the Soviet era, were less formally tied to, and monitored by, local Soviet structures like the schools, administrative offices, and executive structures of the

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[80] There are only two schools in town that use Kyrgyz as the language of instruction. The one which lies near the new mosque is the largest in town. It was built in the later 1970s as a part of the larger development projects going on in town. The other is a small boarding school located on the hill in an older area of town.

[81] In 2000 Tekebaev was a candidate for president, but his candidacy was nullified by the courts. The charges were largely believed to be false and spurred protests in Bazaar-Korgon in 2000. Tekebaev was an opposition leader in the March 2005 revolutions and served as leader of the new parliament.

collective farms. They were by and large the Uzbek peasants. However, this was not universally true, as Icabek's religious experiences demonstrates. Since his new commitment to Islam, Icabek said he'd also had a desire to do something for Bazaar-Korgon as an act of merit (*savap*).

After hearing of the proposed mosque, Icabek agreed to become the local foreman of the project. Toktosun however, still had to find the funding. He said that he searched for a long time, and tried many sources before he finally located a willing sponsor – the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). According to their web-site WAMY is "an independent international organization and an Islamic forum that supports the work of Muslim organizations and needy communities the world over".[82] The web-site further explains that mosque construction is one of their seven main humanitarian projects for Muslim communities. Though the organization is behind the project, there is also an individual sponsor. In the banner displayed at the construction site, both WAMY and an anonymous benefactor are named. Furthermore, Toktosun and Icabek both refer to an "Arab Man" in Bishkek as the source of the funds.[83] The man, however, was never present during the construction process.

Construction began in early 2004. The budget and timeline of construction were all provided for by the Bishkek sponsor. He worked with the local community (i.e. Icabek and Toktosun) through his secretary, Marat, a Kyrgyz man from Bishkek. Marat visited the sites, checked the financial records and handled all communication between the parties involved. Icabek was the contact person on the Bazaar-Korgon side regarding construction, but the money was wired to a Jalal-Abad bank account in Toktosun's name. The funds were dispersed in stages. Marat checked both the actual construction of the project and the financial records before money for the next stage of the project was given.

Beyond conceiving of the idea, the neighborhood of Sai also participated in other aspects of the project. Toktosun emphasized that the donor was very careful with his money and expected an account of every penny, as outlined in the budget. Thus there was money for a mosque, but no money to fund the trips Toktosun took to Bishkek to finalize legal and financial matters. The Sai

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[82] http://www.wamy.co.uk/index.htm. "The World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) is an independent international organization and an Islamic forum that supports the work of Muslim organizations and needy communities the world over. WAMY's headquarters are based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. WAMY has regional as well various branches in and outside Saudi Arabia. Established in 1972, it has presence in 55 countries and an associate membership of over 500 youth organizations around the world. WAMY is a member of the United Nations NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations),and recognized for its vast scope of humanitarian and relief work that encompasses about 60% of the Muslim World."

[83] Information regarding the funding of the mosque was a slightly sensitive topic, largely because the benefactor wished to remain anonymous. It was difficult to obtain more detailed information for this reason.

neighborhood largely sponsored these trips. Furthermore, they took responsibility for providing regular lunches to the construction workers employed in the project. They also made donations to pay for the interior items of the mosque (carpets, lights, etc). Finally, the future imam of the mosque, a close associate of Toktosun's, came from the neighborhood.

As noted in the introduction, the neighborhoods of Bazaar-Korgon varied in their level of solidarity and community cohesion. The apartments in Sai were often thought to be the least cohesive neighborhood of any local community in the town. The fact that collective action was not taken in order to resolve common grievances like the frequent breakdown of water and electricity services demonstrates this. But, interestingly, the community did come together to help construct the mosque. Chris Hann has argued that a resurrected version of the concept of "civil society" might provide a starting point for new enquiries in political anthropology. His conception of the term focused on "the ideas and practices through which cooperation and trust are established in social life" (1996: 22). He argued that because the state and the actions of its agents play a central role in process of establishing trust and cooperation in social life, whether abetting or inhibiting these process, investigations into a newly defined civil society would overcome the classic political, and political anthropological, binary opposition of the state and the people (1996: 22)).

Applying this framework, it is apparent that religion in Bazaar-Korgon, at least in the case of the mosque construction project, promoted "civil society." Moreover, both the relationships of trust and the independently organized group of people who made space for exerting religious views were not made in opposition to the state, but built in conjunction with it. The project was carried out using secular institutions (*mahalla komiteit*) and with the support of secular authorities (Tekebaev and the town government). It was legally and actually possible to obtain town-owned land for the purposes of constructing a mosque. Moreover, the project was made financially feasible because the international Muslim organization and anonymous benefactor who donated money were allowed to operate and/or reside in Kyrgyzstan by the secular government.

The mosque construction project in Bazaar-Korgon was an endeavor which took cooperation and trust on a number of different levels: between neighborhood members who cooked for construction workers, between higher and lower public officials who sought and granted access to land, between religious and secular authorities working together to finding funding, and between friends and new acquaintances establishing relationships in a common endeavor. It revealed the complex ways interactions between various (sometimes competing) communities, the state, and individuals worked together to form not only community cohesion but venues for solidarity in a new political and social environment.

Part of the novelty of the project was that religious discourses and religiously motivated actions were the impetus and unifying factors around which action for the collective good was taken. In this way the mosque construction signaled the creation of what Salvatore and Eickelman have termed Muslim publics (ref). In the post-Soviet period, as Islam became more important as an ordering system for individuals and small groups – like families and groups of friends – collective action presented in, and justified with reference to, religious discourses was self-consciously done and was perceived by others to have been done, at least partly, out of an individual or collective desire to be obedient Muslims, to be compliant with Allah's will. Thus because acts like the mosque construction – presented in religious discourse, indeed presented as religious acts – were understood as having different motivations and goals they held different significance as public acts. They indicated a new role for religion in collective life. Moreover, they indicated an end to the idea that public life, social action, or even development projects were and should be *de facto* secular.

If the construction project shows this change implicitly, Icabek's perspective on and role in it are a more explicit example of new modes of social action. Toktosun and the community viewed the project as a joint endeavor of many parties but Icabek took much more personal credit for the project. He saw the construction of the mosque as something he initiated and enabled. Moreover, he saw it as the first stage in a larger development project he had in mind – the construction of a "*mikro-raion*" (suburb of a town or town neighborhood). In 2004 Bazaar-Korgon began the legal process of trying to upgrade its status from that of a village (*aiyl)* to that of a town (*shaar*) or at least a small town (*shaarchi*). In order to accomplish this, there were a series of benchmarks the Bazaar-Korgon had to reach. For example, a small micro-bus route was opened to carry travelers from one side of the town to the other – inner-city transport being one of the marks of a town. As a part of this larger project, Toktosun wanted to develop the apartment complex area into an official *mikro-raion* of the new "town". He dreamed of officially naming the area "*Ene-Sai*" (Mother Sai), getting the micro-bus route to run through the complex, and generally improving the physical conditions of the neighborhood. For Icabek the mosque was an important religious building, but it was just one part of what he saw as a larger effort to develop his home area and ultimately the entire town.

The propriety of religion

As outlined in the introduction of the dissertation, elements of Muslim life in Central Asia, such as veiling, had been vilified over the course of the twentieth century and had become central themes in representations of Islam as backward and threatening. International connections between Muslims and their subversive potential was likewise a primary trope employed in negative depictions of Islam, beginning in British colonial writings on Central Asia, running through Tsarist portrayals, and abiding in later Soviet discourse on the region (see introduction) The discourse slightly altered over the years but remained largely congruent into the contemporary period where fears about underground terrorist cells in the region and their connection to larger international networks form the main frame for interpreting the religious landscape of Central Asia. These Central Asian fears and their convergence with more global ones demonstrate not only the power and salience of political myth (see Bottici 2006) in the contemporary period, but the intertwined history of the modernizing regimes of Central Asia and the West.

Despite the fact, than, that both veiling and international Muslim connections have been negatively stereotyped and given central importance in discourses about the "evils" of Islam, reactions to actual instances of veiling and international Muslim connections differed. If elements of each self-reflexively religious act could have been evaluated by Bazaar-Korgonians as potentially threatening and subversive, why was one negatively viewed while the other was not? After all the mosque project was in fact funded by foreign money and it came from an organization with roots the actual home of the actual Wahhabis – Saudi Arabia. What determined the propriety of one act and the impropriety of the other? Why did the mosque project succeed?

One part of the explanation lies in the factual role of WAMY in the community. The fact that the international donor was given little attention in the above account of the mosque construction project is not without reason. Interestingly, while the WAMY web-site mentions that they are a "member of the United Nations NGOs" and are recognized worldwide for their humanitarian efforts, a lawsuit was launched against them by some relatives of the victims of the September 11th attacks (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan).[84] WAMY has denied the allegations. Despite this notoriety, WAMY appears so little in the ethnography because they operated only in the background. They had no direct lasting impact as their cooperation with the community ended with the completion of the mosque. They did not even distribute religious publications. Their role

[84] See Benthall 2007 for a concise piece on 'the overreaction' against Muslim charities.

in and impact on the religious landscape in Bazaar-Korgon was important, facilitating not only the construction of a place of prayer, but of community cohesion, and religious social action. While the mosque project was unthinkable without them, they were largely invisible to the community.

Another mitigating factor in the mosque construction project's success was that it was not only regulated by secular and religious authorities, but that it was perceived to be under the supervision of these leaders. As demonstrated in chapter 3, regulation of religious activities by the official religious leadership ensured, for those residents not partaking in these activities, that they were not deviant or extreme. The supervision and involvement of secular authorities added weight to this regulation. Wearing a *hijab* by contrast, were not perceived to be under this supervision, moreover it was associated with "foreign forms" of Islam. The propriety of the religious beliefs of *hijab*-wearing women was unknown and difficult to control.

The mosque project should also be understood in terms of the town's history of modernization. It was a step towards reconstructing the infrastructure of modernity which had broken down following the collapse of the USSR. The explicit religious tone of the project did signal new modes of social action and visions of a religious modern which would be objectionable to some residence committed to the idea of secular public actions. However the project occurred in a form – the mosque – that had, since the early 1990s, been a standard mode of "reconnecting" with a past and a communal sense of ethno-religious identity that was understood as having been lost or suppressed during the Soviet era. Participation in, or validation of the mosque construction project did not necessitate the kind of altered conceptions, discourses, and actions understood to accompany other locally-labeled "religious" behavior – such as wearing a head-scarf. It did not counter-act the widespread notions of Muslimness present in the community – those which understood it to be part of ethno-national belonging – but rather strengthened it. At the same time it was a project supported by the newly pious because it provided a place for the collective performance of rituals and may have been seen as the re-Islamization of social space.

John Peel has argued that people convert either because the truth-value or the identity-value of the new religion becomes stronger than that of the former normative order (forthcoming). For Peel, truth-value indicates the way a religion's message "expresses the reality of things" for potential converts while identity value is the compatibility of a new religion with what a convert "feel[s] or want[s] themselves to be" (i*bid:* 15). The conflict between the newly pious and others in the community in many ways can be seen as revolving around this divide. For the newly pious the way others in the community value Islam as a source of ethno-national

identity is at odds with their conception of it as a truth-system, one which requires participation in proscribed rituals, observances, and bodily fashioning and one which sees “Muslim” as primarily a religious identity. What is interesting about this distinction in terms of the mosque construction project is that while many acts and discourses which locally are understood as differentiating the newly pious from others – like veiling – necessitate valuing Islam for its truth value and criticizing its role as an ethno-national identity marker, the mosque project allowed both conceptions of Islam without necessitating the rejection of the other.

It was a religious project that could bring Muslims of the community together despite their differing views and produce something that was nearly universally seen as productive for the community. The mosque spoke to residents because of its value in identity projects, truth projects, and development projects. Like the construction of the *Raion* Friday Mosque opened five years prior, it signaled successful participation in new economic orders where international donors and grants were one of the surest ways to economic achievement. And while aesthetically it may not have dramatically altered the landscape of the Sai neighborhood complex, it at least indicated that the community was trying to change the state of its decaying environment.

Conclusion – the infrastructure of a religious modern

While religion has long been thought to be incompatible with modernity, projects like the mosque show that new definitions of modernity and development are being generated. Structural progress which signals modernity and contributes to the economic development of a community – as Icabek’s visions of a *mikro-raion* – today can include religious structures. And while there are many cases of religion being used as nothing more than a discourse to shore up support for national identity in an otherwise primarily secular state, there are cases like the mosque in Bazaar-Korgon which are more thoughtful, reflexive approaches at creating religious public space and new visions of modernity. Icabek’s vision of the development of *Sai* indicates the public utility of religion – the capacity for religiously inspired projects to help create order and social cohesion – even among those not subscribing to the notions held by the organizers of the project. It also demonstrates the way new conceptions of modernity are being created in a community where socialist “atheist” visions and Western “secular” notions dominate the landscape.

S.N. Eisenstadt has argued that one of the hallmarks of religious communities in the last few decades is their move from anti-modernist stances to positions which reject Western hegemony over defining modernity (2006). Religious individuals and communities now embrace

modernity by creating it on their own terms. In Bazaar-Korgon, however, the argument should perhaps be turned around. Here we see a self-proclaimed modern community full of modern citizens who are attempting to embrace locally "new" interpretations of "their religion" and to deal with the impact this has on their individual and collective identity, their society, and the state. Of course the interpretations of Islam they embrace as well as the degrees and manners in which they do so vary. But in the end they too are people who are attempting to reconcile religious belief, practice, and identification with "local" notions of modernity.

While these developments could be charted without reference to the Soviet period, I have argued that an understanding of the Soviet experience as modern is essential for a proper interpretation of the mosque construction project, its impact on the community, and the changes its success in the community signal. A solely contemporary view of the project – the way it created community cohesion and constructed public space for the articulation of a religiously inspired social and infrastructural development projects – might read it as a criticism of or reaction to the Western development projects and visions of modernity that have bombarded the country over the last decade and half (Boehm 1999; Anderson 2003). But the significance of the mosque construction project lay equally in its dialogue with Soviet notions and projects of modernity – the way it upheld some Soviet notions such as the equation of construction with progress and questioned others such as the value of religion in societal progress. The success of the project was partly rooted in the way it addressed the various normative orders competing for dominance in the contemporary landscape – including the legacies of Soviet ideology. And while these legacies are dying out, their momentary persistence shapes the contemporary debates over religion in the community.

That the mosque construction project was successful may not be a startling find, especially in a community that is nearly 100% Muslim. But its success and the new forms of public space and civil society it fostered are interesting precisely because Soviet modernizing campaigns had eliminated religious social action, objectified and negatively stereotyped religious behavior, and (largely) vilified international associations between Muslims. By understanding the Soviet Union as modern and tracing the peculiarities of its specific political and cultural project not only is our own conception and use of the term "modernity" strengthened, we are likewise better able to interpret the specific project of religious modernity currently being creating in Bazaar-Korgon.

Chapter 6

Clone: Brazilian Soap Operas and Muslimness

Introduction

Shahista, Farida, and Saodat were gathered around the television talking while commercials played. Suddenly one sister hushed the others and drew their attention to the images on the screen. The pictures were of beautifully dressed Muslim women, swirling strands of DNA, and images from Brazil and Morocco. It was a promotional trailer for the new Brazilian soap opera *Clone*. When I asked the girls what the new serial was about, they replied they weren't sure, but mentioned that it had something to do with Brazilians and Muslims. While the images of the Moroccan Muslims had grabbed their attention, the girls said nothing about the rather unique central topic of the soap opera: human cloning. The sisters were not the only ones. For many viewers around the world, it was the lavishly presented, and highly romanticized, Muslim other that made the soap opera so popular. One observer noted that Armenia had gone "Arabic over [the] wildly popular soap opera" (Grigoryan 2003). Another reported that "'*El Clon*' is leaving Latin America wide-eyed and drop-jawed for all things Arab" (Eisele 2002).

The sister's reactions to the trailer run in January 2004 indicated that the responses of residents in the town of Bazaar-Korgon would be similar. It's not difficult to understand why. While the Soviet Union had long since ended and with it the militant control of religion, its secularist legacies—which had vilified pious Muslim behaviour and turned Muslim identity into little more than an ethno-national marker— continued. This precluded any meaningful debate over the constitution of Muslimness well into the post-Soviet period. Moreover, with nearly all international television broadcast coming via Moscow and access to the Internet and satellite dishes limited, the amount of media from other parts of the Muslim World was highly curbed. However, the end of the 1990s saw a relatively free religious environment in Kyrgyzstan and the concomitant development of space for religious practice and discussion. *Clone's* broadcast not only signalled this changing environment, it also helped create it by producing a discursive space where viewers could interrogate norms about what constituted Muslimness (cf. Das 1995: 180).

As the months went on, and *Clone* rose to tremendous popularity in the community, public discussion showed that indeed what had provoked viewers' interest was the programme's

portrayal of Muslims. Residents said the soap opera was so fascinating because it was the first serial they had seen with (non-Central Asian) Muslims as leading characters. In short, they explained, watching the soap was a chance for them to see how Muslims really lived. *Clone* became a part of the daily discussion in the community over the nature of Islam and Muslimness. Whether this debate was an actual discussion between family members, friends, colleagues, or acquaintances, or a part of the internal dialogue of individual residents, *Clone* was a source of information, agitation, and encouragement in these deliberations.

In contrasting the "two worlds" of Brazil and Morocco, *Clone*'s creators objectified the places, lifestyles, and communities of the soap opera presenting them as fundamentally different from one another. Moreover, through text and visual imagery, they rendered a highly orientalized portrayal of Muslims and Muslim life especially regarding issues of gender. As has already been established in the anthropological literature on media, viewers actively construct the meaning of a given media text or image (e.g. Wilk 1993; Ginsburg 2002). Their interpretations, opinions, and usages of media are often highly divergent from those imagined or intended by the producers. An analysis of viewer reception in Bazaar-Korgon shows that despite portrayals which presented a narrow and very normative view of Muslims, in some cases the material gathered from viewing *Clone* widened individual perceptions about "other" Muslims and helped temper negative perceptions of "religious" individuals.

This was possible because *Clone* flatteringly depicted practices locally associated with "extreme" religious behavior – like veiling. Orientalization, in Said's articulation, was a complex process of representation which created romanticized notions of the other as much as it did negative stereotypes. The orientalized view in *Clone* may have been patronizing, but it was romantic and beautiful, creating an air of desirability and normalcy around practices that, in Bazaar-Korgon, would have otherwise been interpreted as threatening. By recasting these practices, the depictions of Muslim life in *Clone* could serve as a positive resource for a community attempting to imagine, and build, a public life that included religious individuals.

The soap and its imagery

Clone was produced by the Brazilian media giant TV Globo and aired in Brazil in 2001. Subsequently the program was syndicated and shown around the world. In 2004 it was broadcast by a Russia television station and aired throughout the former USSR, including Kyrgyzstan. As previously noted, the seemingly unique theme of this soap opera was its use of a *cloned* human

being as one of its central characters. The main story-line revolved around the love affair of a Brazilian man, Lucas, and a Brazilian born woman of Moroccan decent, Jade [*zha-dee*]. The couple, who met in Morocco after Jade moved there to live with the family of her mother, began their love affair in the 1980s. The affair, alas, was ill-fated. Jade was married by her family to Said; Lucas too married. Decades of separation for the lovers began. The soap opera followed the lives of the two – who managed to steal away for a night every few years – as well as the various friends, relatives and colleagues that surrounded them.

Where did the clone come in? Lucas was a twin whose brother was killed when they were eighteen years old. Lucas's family was quite wealthy and influential; one of his father's closest friends, and his own godfather, was a geneticist. Dr. Albieri, saddened that his friend had lost his son, secretly took a cell sample from Lucas, successfully cloned the cell, and implanted the embryo into a woman, Deusa, who had come to his clinic for in vitro fertilization.[85] No one knew of the doctor's deeds. Deusa was told only that the sperm donor was anonymous. Once the clone was born he "disappeared" for nearly two decades returning only when Lucas and Jade had reached their forties. In the meantime Jade had become disenchanted with Lucas who, she felt, had lost his physical appeal, his sense of romance, and the ambitions of his youth. When the clone reappeared and met Jade, she fell in love with him, creating what Perez called an uncommon love triangle: Lucas became his own rival. In the end Dr. Albieri and the clone, the former unable to come to terms with what he had done and the latter with what he was, wandered off together into the desert and so the soap opera ended (Massarani and Moreira).[86]

But what of the Muslims? A soap opera about a love triangle which includes a clone could have easily been set entirely in Brazil; the main dilemma of the program does not require Muslims to make it tenable. Nonetheless, the writer decided to add the "Muslim twist" to this tale. Perez's serials are known for engaging with social issues – like alcohol or drug abuse. And while she addressed some of these themes in *Clone* through side narratives of minor characters, she said she chose to include Muslims to make the program more multi-cultural, exposing audiences to other people and their ways.[87] In doing so she added a dimension to the story which likely was responsible for its success. The show was not popular, however, simply because

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[85] Deusa is the Portuguese word for goddess.

[86] As for the fate of Jade and Lucas I myself don't know as I left the field before it concluded and could not find the information on-line.

[87] Perez, Gloria, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0289800/plotsummary, on 16 November 2004.

Muslims appeared in it but because it portrayed these Muslims in a highly romantic fashion, especially when compared to the Brazilians.

The romance of Muslims in the soap began with the visual imagery used to depict Muslims and their spaces. The Moroccans in *Clone* were depicted as wealthy, except for their servants. They were lavishly dressed, wore vibrant colors, and were adorned with jewels. They lived in large, attractive homes. The physical environment and backdrop of the scenes in Morocco were simply breathtaking – rolling sand dunes bathed in golden light, narrow alleyways lined with fabrics and other fantastical treasures. Nearly every event portrayed in the lives of the Moroccans called for an accompanying dance. In these scenes groups of women were shown performing for the pleasure of a few male guests. There was almost always an additional, special dance involved – a very sensual, evocative piece performed by a single individual.

When the action of the soap opera shifted from one nation to the other, "typical scenes" of the new location were shown to indicate where the action would take place. The Brazilian shots include beaches, palm trees, and large highways. Those of Morocco showed sand dunes, camel trains, men praying, and stereotypical images of "eastern" bazaars. The images painted a very beautiful picture of Morocco. The rich fabrics, unique jewelry, beautiful women, and lavish "harems" were some of the most popular parts of the show. Nevertheless the visual portrayal of Moroccan life was highly exotic and the contrast between "modern" Brazil and "primitive" Morocco was plain. Moroccan streets were devoid of cars. Wealthy Moroccans characters cooked over open fires. Other than a telephone – a rotary dial with a cord – there were no other electronic devices present in the homes of Moroccans. The stereotyping of the home was so strong that the interior of Moroccan-owned houses appeared the same regardless of whether they were in Morocco or Brazil. They all resembled typical orientalized images of "Arab interiors" as can be found in other clichéd portrayals like Disney's *Aladdin*. All in all, the visual picture presented was one of an a-temporal existence of beauty and sensuality and one that was fundamentally *different* from Brazil.

The orientalization of the Moroccans that was accomplished through the depiction of their physical environment also occurred within the content of the program. The episodes which dealt primarily with the Moroccans touched precisely on the subjects where the variance with "Western" life was perceived to be the greatest. Many of these revolved around issues related to gender: seclusion of women, patriarchal society, polygamy, dress, etc. Characters in *Clone* moved quite easily and frequently between Brazil and Morocco, except for the heroine, Jade. According to the portrayal of Moroccan life in the show, Jade had to obtain the signature of a male relative in order to leave the country. Her many attempts to reach Brazil – to visit Lucas or see her sick

daughter, for example – were plots for a number of episodes. What was always highlighted was Jade's inability to control her own movement and by extension her life.

If the depiction of Jade's struggles with travel displayed the "evils" of patriarchal society, other episodes which dealt with gender relations and female subordination tired to present at least one positive counter-point to every negative instance. For example, a main theme running through the whole serial was Jade's arranged marriage and the ensuing troubles she had in her relationship with her spouse. But her cousin's marriage – also arranged – was portrayed as having a "happy ending". Similarly, when two young girls faced the prospect of veiling, one was shown to be excited – trying out headscarves and talking happily about the event with her mother – while the other tried to avoid it and was forced to deceive her parents. Other episodes addressed the issue of women's power in the home, or the maneuvering ability women have in a male dominated society.[88]

I am not arguing that the soap opera was a nuanced, balanced fictionalization of issues faced by women in Muslim societies. Far from it. What I do want to stress is that orientalization was not only a process of negative stereotyping. Even if the point/counter-point portrayals revealed very flawed, binary logic itself based on orientalized dichotomies, they nonetheless gave voice to the possibility that there was value and beauty in some of these practices. In Said's classic argument orientalization was not just, or even necessarily, the demonizing of another. As Baumann notes, the process of orientalization involved a positive reversal as well as a negative mirroring of the other (Baumann 2004: 20). This reversal, based on a longing for certain elements "we" have lost which the other still has, led to the flattering, highly romantic portrayals which helped make *Clone* so popular. Though Muslims were depicted as "backward" in terms of technology and certain "modern" values they were nonetheless beautiful depictions which valorized certain aspects of the (perceived) Moroccan culture.

[88] One show depicted the way a young girl tried to avoid marriage. She was coached by the elder female women of her household in the kinds of behavior parents-in-law would dislike. When she was brought to meet her potential spouse and his parents, she behaved appallingly, 'accidentally' spilling tea, being too overzealous about her potential mate and taking his hand, etc. Of course the parents refused to take her as their daughter-in-law and she avoided an unwanted marriage.

The place of *Clone* in everyday life

Clone had the impact it did on the community of Bazaar-Korgon partly because almost everybody watched it. In fact I couldn't find more than a few friends of acquaintances who didn't watch it at least occasionally. *Clone* was not unique in this sense as soap operas and serials in general were very popular and television viewing was widespread. Nearly every household or family compound I knew of in Bazaar-Korgon had a television. Those who didn't have one regularly viewed at a neighbor's or relative's house. Television viewing was in many respects a communal activity. This is true partly because a compound may have included five, ten, or even more people. On one occasion I observed upwards of twenty people on a porch gathered around a tiny television set. The group, (two brothers and two generations of their offspring) included men and women as well as adults, youth, and children. The program they were watching was *Clone*. During the commercials, the scenes and story lines were hotly debated and viewers who had to step away for a moment – to stir a pot of soup, to answer the phone, or to greet a guest – were quickly updated a on what they had missed when they returned.

Men too watched soap operas regularly. Nevertheless, they tended to view the programs in their own homes. Women, on the other hand, frequently watched them at others' houses. This communal viewing pattern fell into the natural rhythm of visiting. Female neighbors regularly and informally called on each other throughout the day and evening. These visits occurred for any number of reasons including, but not limited to: alleviation of boredom, help with a variety of household circumstances, friendship, gossip, or social and economic support. Soap opera viewing did not hamper these neighborly visits; it became a part of them. A neighbor may have stopped over to pass the time or to discuss a frustrating familial circumstance. But when both she and her host noticed that the hour was approaching for a soap opera to begin, there was no hesitation to leave the conversation behind, switch on the television, and begin discussing the frustrating familial circumstances of the soap opera characters instead.

My experiences while conducting a household survey showed just how important soap operas were in the everyday lives of Bazaar-Korgon residents.[89] After a few failed attempts to secure interviews for the survey, I learned that interviewing at night was only possible between the hours of 8:00 and 9:30. This open window of time represented the ending of one soap opera (*Clone*) and the beginning of another *(Guadelupe)*. Any attempt to interview during the broadcast

[89] Cf. Ruth Mandel for the popularity of soap operas in Kazakhstan (1998:636).

of these soaps was futile because either the potential respondent would refuse and ask me to come back at another time, or would be so absent minded as to ensure a failed interview.

Controversial religious garments

While there were many venues through which the newly pious explored and debated Islam, *Clone* and its portrayal of religious practices like prayer, veiling, and gender segregation provided a venue where norms concerning the propriety of religious observances were interrogated by a wider spectrum of the community (cf. Das 1995: 180). The positive portrayal of characters who kept certain religious observances in the soap opera contrasted with negative stereotypes in the community about "religious" people, forcing an interrogation of the later notions. This processes is perhaps most evident in reference to ideas about bodily fashioning. One of the most popular and most discussed aspects of *Clone* was the beautiful female Moroccan characters and their clothes. Importantly, all the Moroccan women wore variations on the *hijab* when depicted in spaces outside the home. The *hijabs* in *Clone* were perceived by residents as glamorous. Importantly, they were worn by the most popular characters, characters whom residents rated as modern, beautiful, and enviable women. Viewers' evaluations of the *hijab,* and the women who wore them, in *Clone* differed significantly with their perceptions of hijab-wearing women in Bazaar-Korgon. The later conceptions were tied up with negative stereotypes about the veil as a symbol of backwardness or extremism. A short discussion of community perceptions of religiously motivated dress is in order to display the variance between evaluations of the veil in *Clone* and in the community.

In the early morning hours of a hot June day, I walked with three young Uzbek girls across Bazaar-Korgon. Each of us wore a headscarf. It was unusual for the girls to do so as young, unmarried women their age did not normally cover their heads. However, because we wore our scarves in a style typical around the town – tied simply at the nape of our necks – no one took notice of us along the way. Twenty minutes later we arrived at a house where we were to meet a few young women who would take us to a religious study group. We'd been invited to attend this women's *davat* gathering in the *Sai* area, but did not know the specific location. All of the women wore *hijabs* or *niqabs*. Before leaving the gated compound (*havla*), one of the eldest women broke us up into groups of two or 3, each of which had someone who knew the way to the meeting. The groups left one at a time, with a few minutes between groups. I asked a young woman in my group why we had been divided. She told me that the women didn't want to draw

extra attention to themselves. It was hard enough wearing the *hijab* or *niqab* in the community, she said, let alone traveling in large groups with similarly dressed women. They didn't want to arouse the suspicion of the neighbors. They didn't want people to know where they were going.

I was both sympathetic to and surprised by the girl's response. I knew all too well how difficult it was to wear the *hijab* in Bazaar-Korgon. The dress style was still fairly novel in the community, though the number of women wearing similar forms of veils had visibly increased since the millennium. It was common public opinion that women who wore the *hijab*, who'd "turned and gone to religion" (*dinge burlup getkin),* were religious fanatics. When these women went out in public they attracted a lot of attention. At the same time, I knew that there was no reason for the women to be afraid. There was nothing illegal about what we were doing. The headscarf was not prohibited and the d*avat* groups were sanctioned by religious and secular authorities. Yet community gossip, firmly rooted in, and dialectically created in conjunction with, Soviet and post-Soviet discourses of Muslim extremism had already branded *hijab*-wearing women as suspicious and potentially threatening (McBrien 2007). This was the source of the women's unease.

Alterations in bodily appearance were one of the "indicators" most frequently referenced when Bazaar-Korgonians wished to demonstrate that someone had "turned and gone to religion." The forms of dress adopted were perceived of as foreign and as indicators of extremism. The number of women altering their form of dress from the norm in Bazaar-Korgon was greater than the number of men. Indeed, the husbands of most of the women I knew who wore the *hijab* looked like "average" men in town. Perhaps that is why men with deviating bodily appearances drew even more attention than women. I had a discussion with the four children, aged thirteen to twenty, of a family one afternoon about their lives and the life of their neighborhood. The children's parents both regularly prayed *namaz* and fasted during Ramadan. Their mother wished to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, but because the head of the household was out of work, the family could barely get by, let alone finance the hajj. All the children were interested in learning more about Islam, and the eldest two had been praying off and on for the previous few years.

We were discussing their neighborhood mosque and who in their area attended it. The boys, who did not attend themselves, guessed that somewhere between ten and twenty men went daily. At least one of the regular attendees, they said, was a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir. He lived around the corner from the family. I asked the boys how they knew the man was a member. Abror began describing the man – his beard, his white, tunic-like shirt. Abror's younger sister chimed

in: “Even their two-and-a-half-year-old daughter wears a head scarf like this!”[90] I pushed them further, asking whether there was any other way they knew. Had the man himself admitted that he was a member? Abror reiterated his comments about the man’s clothing. Whether or not there were other untold “signs” that led Abror and his siblings to their conclusion about their neighbor (or whether they were simply reiterating the opinion of others), their comments show that they were convinced that referencing his bodily appearance and clothing should be enough to substantiate their claims and convince me of his membership in the group.

The discussion of women’s bodily fashioning occurred more frequently in the community. More covered forms of veiling – like those portrayed in *Clone* –were one of the most common traits that signified to many that a certain person was an extremist. A conversation I had with Gulmira, a twenty year-old university student, demonstrates some of the stereotypes held about women who wore their headscarves in these manners. One afternoon Gulmira told me about her neighbor, a young woman a few years older then herself. Gulmira did not know her neighbor well, but she had seen her around a lot. According to Gulmira she had been an average young woman until she got married.

> “Then she became a Wahhabi”, she added.
> “How do you know she became a Wahhabi?” I asked.
> “She covered herself, wore her headscarf like this”, Gulmira explained.
> “Are you sure she’s a Wahhabi?” I continued.
> “Well, no. It might be that her husband is a Wahhabi and that he forced her to dress that way”, she admitted.

Gulmira’s admission of uncertainty hardly indicated a real questioning of her own views. Our discussion revealed that she linked the wearing of a *hijab* with Wahhabis. For Gulmira, the neighbor’s alteration of dress meant a change in her beliefs about Islam or, alternatively, that her husband was the one with the extreme views.

In Bazaar-Korgon, the tropes of religious extremism were part of the discourse residents utilized as they dealt with the expansion of Islam, the proliferation of a plurality of religious voices, and the effects these changes had on their community and on themselves. Residents faced new religious structures, new methods of religious education and dissemination of religious

[90] As noted in chapter two, the movement that accompanies this expression involves tracing a line with one’s fingers, from each ear, down the jawbone, to the chin. The movement mimics the closure of a veil in the style of a hijab.

knowledge, and an increase in public acts of piety. Moreover, they had to rethink concepts of Muslimness. Discourses about Wahhabis were important in making sense of the changing religious landscape in their community. But the issues, practices, and images that were viewed in *Clone* contrasted with the stereotypes involved in these discourse. *Clone* provided – in most residents' evaluations of the serial – a positive image of Muslims who participated in practices and bodily fashioning that were normally associated with religious extremism. In fact, the beautiful modes of veiling depicted in the soap opera, and the heroines who donned the scarves, were some of the most loved aspects of the program.

Fashionable religious garments and *Clone*

Just after her marriage in 2000, Mukadas, a resident of Bazaar-Korgon, said she and her husband came "closer to religion" (*dinge jakin).* A few years later, at age 26, Mukadas slowly began to transform her mode of dress and veiling, covering more and more of her body. Mukadas was an avid fan of *Clone*, as were nearly all the members of her immediate and extended families. Mukadas said that she learned something new from *Clone* every time she watched it for, as she explained, the characters in the programme dealt with the same kinds of problems she faced. She was sometimes stared at when walking in public and often she would overhear harsh comments on her mode of dress. When she watched *Clone* Mukadas said she could relate to the feeling of difference that the veiled Moroccans in Brazil encountered. Beyond that she said she found validation for her form of dress through them. For Mukadas seeing beautiful young women veiling in the most fashionable ways confirmed her idea that veiling was not a part of an antiquated religion as the critics in her town intimated.

Mukadas wasn't the only one who relished the fashionable side of *Clone*. As previously mentioned the garments of the female Moroccan characters were stunning in color and design so much so that they were as much an item of discussion as the actual story-line. A certain style of jewelry worn by the Moroccan characters in the show could be found at every stall in the bazaar. New stores took on the names of beloved characters and there were even dresses which were called "Jade". *Clone* offered an alternative view concerning the aesthetics and meaning of the veil. Girls in Bazaar-Korgon who were considering veiling often talked about their dreams of having a collection of scarves and clothes as wonderful as Jade's and Latifah's. Through these characters girls in Bazaar-Korgon saw that Islam and veiling were not at war with fashion.

Interestingly, even some girls who had not considered veiling said that they experimented with the veil because of the influence of *Clone*.

Gulmira, who in the fall of 2003 interpreted her neighbor's bodily fashioning as an indicator of Wahhabi tendencies, had begun rethinking her own understandings of Islam and Muslimness over the course of the winter. In early spring Gulmira and I discussed the religious beliefs and practices of mutual friends and acquaintances. Comparing herself to them, Gulmira said that although she called herself a Muslim, she was no longer entirely sure what she meant when she said that. She explained that she'd come to question what she understood Muslimness to mean. When she looked at the practices of some of her more "devout" friends and acquaintances that prayed daily and fasted at Ramadan, she commented that "I am not doing anything with my religion".

Gulmira was also an avid *Clone* watcher. She reported that after viewing *Clone* and seeing the fabulous clothes and veils she went home and tried on her mother's headscarves. What Gulmira didn't do was tie them like her mother wore them, at the nape of the neck, rather she experimented with the various ways Jade and Latifah tied theirs all of which fully covered their hair and neck. Gulmira said "I did it because I wanted to know how it would feel and whether, if I someday wanted to wear my scarf like this, it would suit the shape of my face." Gulmira said she'd never seriously considered becoming a more devout Muslim, and in light of her friends' practices and her respect for them, sometimes wondered whether she should even identify herself as one.

Clone did not directly help her with her questions, but she remarked that it did influence the way she thought about the veil. She said that she no longer believed that the veil was always ugly or that it was only for the old and extremists. It could be a very beautiful and fashionable form of dress, she explained, but one that was worn by Muslims more "devout" than herself. When looking at the variance in the opinions Gulmira expressed in the fall and the spring, it's impossible to say whether she'd made a long-term alteration, temporally changed her view, or was unaware of the inconsistencies in her two evaluations. However, her varying opinions show powerfully the kind of alternative notions of Muslimness that *Clone* was helping foster.

Lisa Rofel analyzed a popular soap opera in China showing why, despite the fact that it was "one of the first popular programs devoid of political content," the soap opera was highly controversial rousing serious public debate. Her argument pointed to the way that popular culture can serve "as a site for the constitution of national subjects" (1994: 701). Similarly, in her study of soap operas in India, Mankekar traced the "connections between responses to television and the continuous constitution of national and gendered subjectivities" (1993: 544). What is

intriguing about the broadcast, viewing, and discussions of *Clone* in Bazaar-Korgon is that it too was debated because of the way it commented on the construction of national identity. However, unlike those analyzed by Mankekar, Rofel, or Abu-Lughod (1993 and 1995) the soap opera was not viewed by individuals who identified with the national subjectivities portrayed in it. It was neither designed to teach, model, shape nor project images for or about Kyrgyz or Uzbeks. Viewers in Bazaar-Korgon did belong, however, to another imagined community shown in the program – the global community of Muslims. Because widespread, local conceptions of Muslimness were intertwined with ethno-national identity, as outlined in chapter 2, the soap widened the discursive space for interrogating this unique ethno-national religious subjectivity.

This interrogative progress was already underway as the newly pious were challenging the premise that "Muslim" was primarily an ethno-national marker and asserting instead that it was an inherently religious category. Residents associated the practices and bodily fashioning depicted in *Clone* with canonical interpretations of Islam and the practices of the newly pious. But they did not perceive the characters in the show to be threatening, backward, or overly religious in the way the newly pious were understood to be. The characters – even the apparent antagonist, Said – were well loved in town. Like most soap opera characters, they were beautiful and enviable. This explains why seeing their participation in certain religious prescriptions may have caused residents to rethink, if only partially, their views. Moreover, unlike other forms of media in town which conveyed scripture-orientated messages about Islam– like recorded sermons or booklets – *Clone* was a form of media consumed by more than those who were "interested in Islam". *Clone*'s public was wider and more diverse.

Critical Views

In Bazaar-Korgon there is a sense that during the 70 years of socialism, Muslims in Central Asia lost the knowledge (and practice) of true Islam and proper Muslim behaviour. As a result, many residents of the town perceived themselves as less knowledgeable about "real" Islam, or at least they portrayed themselves that way when discussing *Clone.*[91] One of the most repeated phrases I heard when viewing or discussing the programme with others was the epiphanic statement "*Oh*, so that's how Muslims *really* do it." Many residents thusly attributed educational value to the

[91] While it is true that many residents acknowledge widespread ignorance about even the most basic tenants of Islam, they nonetheless take pride in themselves as some of the most 'modern' or 'advanced' Muslims. Residents thus have ambiguous feelings when they compare themselves to Muslims outside the region.

soap opera and commented on how much they were learning from it. At the same time, they often commented critically on certain aspects of the programme. *Clone* is therefore best understood not as a course on “Islam for Beginners,” as residents made it out to be, but as a programme that widened their exposure to alternative ways of living and interpreting Islam and then, through critical reflection, a programme that became a resource they drew from when constructing their own views.

Ziyod, Mukadas’s husband and a 26 years old bazaar merchant, had also become “closer to religion.” Ziyod watched *Clone* but said that he did not always agree with it. He explained that some episodes showed the Moroccans doing things that Muslims should not be doing like dancing or publicly kissing at wedding ceremonies. He explained that both of these practices were un-Islamic. Despite this, he said, he still enjoyed the programme.

Maksat, a local school teacher age 50, watched *Clone* nightly but he found fault with some of the actions of the Moroccan characters. On one occasion, Maksat contrasted various customs shown in the programme with those kept in Kyrgyzstan—such as practices which establish a girl’s virginity at marriage—concluding that they were unnecessary components of proper Muslim behaviour. The important thing in a Muslim’s life, he said, was that one had faith and behaved decently to others.

While Ziyod’s and Maksat’s interpretations and applications of scenes from *Clone* differed—one drew on *Clone* to narrow appropriate Muslim behaviour while the other employed the soap to widen it—both utilized the soap as a resource in renegotiating, and then asserting, their interpretations of Muslimness. Mukadas however, had a different reaction. She chose not to make normative claims about the actions of the Moroccan Muslims. She said “In *Clone* they do some Muslim things differently. I don’t know if they are wrong, or if the Muslims there are just a different type of Muslim. Before, I thought there were only Muslims and Christians. Now I am learning that there are many types of Muslims.”

Conclusion

Much anthropological literature on media has focused on power relations between producers and viewers, arguing that viewers can “simultaneously ‘submit’ to and ‘resist’ the texts” of the programs they view (Mankekar 1993: 544) or, neither opposing nor acquiescing to its ‘message,’ can create alternative meanings and construct new subjectivities from it (Kulick and Wilson 2002). The views and usages of *Clone* in Bazaar-Korgon show just how complex the relationship

between produced-text and viewed-text can be and what surprising usages texts can be put to. Pulling material from an orientalized view of Moroccans imagined and created by Brazilians, Bazaar-Korgonians interpreted the soap in light of Soviet-era notions of proper Muslim behaviour and Wahhabi threats, as well as the post-Soviet situation of religious plurality and reinvigorated discourses on Islamic extremism. While in other situations the orientalized texts and images of *Clone* have be interpreted as reinforcing negative stereotypes of Muslims and contributing to rifts between "Muslims" and "the West," residents of Bazaar-Korgon utilized the material to expand their understanding of the variety of Muslim experiences. Moreover, they employed it to debate interpretations of proper Muslim behaviour, to interrogate the category "Wahhabi", to reconsider its usage, and to question the validity of an actual Wahhabi threat to the town. In short, rather than being used to reinforce clichéd, narrow views of Muslims, the soap was utilized for the opposite.

In Bazaar-Korgon, the process whereby residents allow strongly, or exclusively, religious interpretations of Islam to proliferate and attempt to normalize them as a part of everyday life is linked to changing notions of modernity (see Chapter 5). If modernity was understood as exclusively a secular domain where backward mores, like women's subordination, and practices, like veiling, were eliminated, new conceptions are forming which realign and challenge these evaluations, ideas, and practices. In her discussion of the cultural politics of modernity and soap opera viewing in Egypt, Lila Abu-Lughod argues that while culture-industry professionals aim their serials at "culturing" and educating subalterns, "this public subverts and eludes them [...] because the ways they are positioned within modernity is at odds with the visions these urban and middle-class professionals promote"(1995: 191). The producers of *Clone* never explicitly sought to modernize its viewers through the serial, as in the case of the soap opera producers in Abu-Lughod's account, but there was nonetheless a presentation of modernity and Muslims' place with it. Ironically, though the presentation of Muslims and modernity in the serial was a typical Western stereotype in many ways congruent to those developed over the Soviet period, the readings of it in Bazaar-Korgon entirely destabilized the proffered gaze. This occurred precisely because, following Abu-Lughod, Bazaar-Korgonians' positions within modernity (see chapters one and five) were not just at odds with the visions of the producers, but were most likely outside the producers' imaginations as well.

There was no possibility for townspeople to imagine a national link with the characters in *Clone*, as in the Egyptian case. But they did identify with the characters as Muslims. Never explicitly engaging with the veracity, desirability, or utility of the producers' depiction of Muslims and modernity in the program, viewers nonetheless subverted a text which uncritically

reproduced orientalized stereotypes. The texts presented in *Clone* entered the local debate on modernity as a source of encouragement for those like Mukadas who were already questioning the mutual exclusivity of religion and modernity prominent in Soviet and Western narratives (see chapter eight). In reconstructing social life after the collapse of Socialism, the newly pious of Bazaar-Korgon were engaged in forming alternative modernities which include "religion" (chapters five and eight). Ironically, one of the most archaic imaginations of secular modernity around served as a source of encouragement in these endeavours.

Individuals like Gulmira, or to some extent Maksat, used the material gathered from *Clone* to widen their horizons on acceptable Muslim behaviour and challenge their own stereotypes, chipping away at local notions concerning the backwardness of "religious" Muslims. For residents like them, the need to reconcile religion and modernity did not come form the kind of individual need expressed by Mukadas. They were not among those in the community interested in religion. But importantly, their community was becoming religiously textured. *Clone* helped them deal with these changes by offering positive material about Muslims – material which demonstrated the modern sides to veiling, arranged marriages, and religious observances like prayer and fasting. With this they could begin to think of a society that was both modern and included space for the discourses, acts, and presence of the newly pious.

Chapter 7

Mukadas's Struggle: Veils and "post-Modernity"

Introduction

In late Fall 2003, after a protracted period of consideration Mukadas Kadirova, aged 25, altered her daily mode of public dress. She changed the way she fastened her headscarf, pinning it securely under her chin so that it completely covered her hair and neck. She no longer bared her arms and, though she had always worn skirts that fell well below her knee, she started wearing them longer so only her feet were visible. Mukadas deliberated for so long neither because she felt uncertain about a Muslim woman's obligations, nor because she lacked the desire to adhere to them. Rather her hesitation resulted from the possible consequences of her actions. Would she be perceived as a religious extremist? Would she be permitted to teach if she desired to return to the classroom? How would her natal family react? And, perhaps most importantly, would she still be a modern woman?

Mukadas's worries are not particularly remarkable; they resonate with the contemporary experience of Muslim women the world over. The history of the branding and brandishing of the veil as an anti-modern symbol has been well-documented (e.g. Ahmed 1992). Through critical inquiries into Muslim women's lived experiences, anthropologists have challenged flat, orientalist readings of the headscarf demonstrating the subaltern uses of the veil as a sign of protest (McLeod 1991), as a means of creating an alternative modernity (Brenner 1996), or as a part of creating oneself as a pious individual (Mahmood 2005). Others have examined the veil in its role as Islamic fashion (Moors and Tarlo 2007) or as part of political chic (White 1999). Nevertheless, despite the variety of intentions and meanings behind Muslim women's mode of dress, and despite explicit challenges to interpretations of the veil as inherently oppressive and backward, its ubiquitous anti-modern image remains.[92] Mukadas's dilemma is related to this globalized situation.

To analyze Mukadas's struggle as a challenge of meta-narratives on modernity, gender, and Islam is, to be forthright, redundant from a theoretical perspective. Yet the redundancy itself is

[92] See articles by Lila Abu Lughod (2002) and Moors (2007) where they struggle against exactly these stereotypes of Muslim women and the veil in the United States and the Netherlands respectively.

intriguing, for Mukadas is not from one of the regions –Europe or "the Muslim majority world"- that have figured prominently in this kind of analysis. She is a citizen of Kyrgyzstan, one of the five former Soviet Central Asian Republics that underwent 70 years of anti-religious and other Soviet modernizing campaigns. Thus I present Mukadas's struggle not to critique once more, these familiar narratives on modernity. Rather, Mukadas's dilemmas are intriguing because they show that she and her community read her decision to veil through these familiar "modernist" narratives. Why is her struggle so similar to those of Muslim women the world over, despite the distinctiveness of her geographical, political and historical setting? Is the similarity simply an example of the contemporary globalized world where goods, information, people, and meta-narratives create global frames of reference? In some ways yes, but this is just the beginning. While contemporary "global flows" influenced the normative landscape of Kyrgyzstan, a longer history of global inter-connectedness as it unfolded in Central Asia is equally important for understanding why Mukadas's struggles with the headscarf are so congruous with others'.

Mukadas Kadirova was born in 1978 in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Kyrgyzstan. While there are obvious differences in concepts of the modern between the Soviet Union and Western (European/American) models, there is remarkable similarity regarding notions of religion, gender, and modernity. While the "modern" qualities of the Soviet Union help explain the parallels between Mukadas and Muslim women from other areas of the world, it is equally important that Mukadas's problematic is not identical to theirs. The differences in her story shed important light both on the distinctiveness of "Soviet" and "post-Soviet" modernity, and pinpoint deficiencies in our own theories of modernity.

Before the seventy years of Soviet modernization Central Asia was a region of diverse populations with competing and shifting social, economic, political, and cultural forms which had had been under firm Tsarist domination for at least 50 years. Thus, there is no single, primordial Central Asian society or culture which Soviet power sullied. However, the consequences of Soviet policies, practices, and campaigns, did profoundly alter the material, physical, and ideological landscapes of the region, even if it failed in create the ideal types it touted in official ideology. Soviet modernization efforts (unintentionally) objectified and systematized notions like religion, tradition, and modernity, transformed conceptions of Muslimness, created nations, and developed a sense of ethno-national identity that was intertwined with the new versions of Muslimness, as argued in chapter two.

The dilemmas faced by Mukadas suggest the erosion of the normative order of the Soviet period, the rising influence of alternative normative orders in local and national communities, but also the continued saliency of some Soviet era notions. When Mukadas contemplated veiling, she

perceived herself as fully modern. She wished to remain so despite new mode of dress and she was thus forced to rethink her vision of modernity and to creatively overcome the material constraints impeding her decision. Her struggle was compounded because she dealt not just with the variety of local interpretations of modernity that exist in any community, but with two distinct overarching categorical interpretations and political mobilizations of modernity which shaped her landscape: the Western and the Soviet one.

Mukadas's deliberation and action regarding her mode of dress must be viewed as a response to the multiple discourses and political projects of modernity, one of which lay neither in the present, nor in a utopian dream of the future, but rather in a nostalgia for the past. Mukadas's dilemma is thus not only about dreams and desires of modernity, it is a modern struggle itself shaped and provoked by the political projects of multiple, self-reflexively modernizing regimes – each unique in its modernity and its ethos of modernity – begun more then a century ago.

This chapter seeks to answer the following question: if visions and dreams of modernity are shaped by actual modernizing regimes, how is Mukadas's struggle related to the distinctive version of Soviet modernity? In answering this question it poses a second. How do people experience modernity, especially regarding its temporal trajectory? This second question has important consequences for how we theorize and employ the notion of modernity as an analytical tool. Simply put, what do we do when actors see themselves concomitantly as being, becoming, and *having been* modern? How do we change our analytical frame to include the experiences of those who see themselves as having fallen from the modern into a "post-modern" abyss?[93]

The USSR and the affects of an alternative modernity

Mukadas is the second eldest child of Zeba and Ulugbek. Zeba, born in 1950 in the city of Osh,[94] was the daughter of an illiterate mother and a father who was a locally famous history professor. Zeba was also partly raised by her grandmother who regularly took her as a young child to pray at

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[93] My usage of the term post-modern, if partly in jest, is meant to convey two points. First, the ethnographic which is to highlight Bazaar-Korgonians own perception of their society as being no longer modern or having fallen from modernity, i.e. 'post-modern', The second is theoretical, drawing attention to the fact that in as much as there are multiple modernities, there are multiple experiences with the failures of modernity – i.e. the Western academic experience of post-modernity as a philosophical/analytical turn is only one type of post-modernity.

[94] Osh is the second largest city in Kyrgyzstan. It is approximately 80 kilometers south-east of Bazaar-Korgon.

the nearby Suleiman's Mountain[95] notwithstanding the bans on religion. Despite this, Zeba's teenage and adult years were devoid of religious expression and she gave little thought to these things, she said. She was, however, very occupied with studying and "advancing" herself.

Ulugbek was of mixed Uzbek-Tatar origin and was a painter. The two fell in love during University. They met at a summer youth camp where they were both leaders. Zeba finished her university studies while Ulugbek, convinced by his friends that his training in Tashkent was spoiling rather than improving his art, traveled extensively throughout the USSR and painted on his own. After he returned to Bazaar-Korgon, he and Zeba married. She moved to Bazaar-Korgon and found a position teaching English in a local school. Between 1974 and 1985 their five daughters – Muyassar, Mukadas, Delnura, Nigora, and Nazima – were born. Zeba never stopped working for more than brief period during this time. Bazaar-Korgon was a small agro-town of around 15,000 inhabitants (now 30,000) with some industry. Zeba and Ulugbek were part of the intelligentsia of Bazaar-Korgon. Ulugbek was locally renowned for his art and had helped establish a regional artist association.[96] The couple was surrounded by the painters and intellectuals of the town. Zeba was enthralled by her husband's creative capabilities. Zeba and Ulugbek taught their daughters to appreciate the arts and learning, surrounding them with paintings, sculptures, and books.

At the same time that the Kadirova girls were growing up, the town of Bazaar-Korgon was under going a transformation, as discussed in chapters two and five. In the late 1970s when Bazaar-Korgon became the capital of a newly-created *raion*, following the logic of Soviet planners, the town had to be "modernized". Residents of Bazaar-Korgon had already seen the transformation of nearby cities. When recalling this period they remember how happy they were that their town too was finally modernizing.

How are we to engage in an anthropological investigation of modernity in the former USSR? A start is to approach it as "a located cultural imaginary" (Rofel1999: xii) or as "the images and institutions associated with Western-style progress and development in a contemporary world" (Knauft 2002: 18). In this way our attention is drawn to the contemporary discursive constructions of modernity and the way they subvert, challenge, accept, and alter Western narratives; the inquiry into Mukadas's struggle is certainly this. Yet we must be mindful

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[95]Suleiman's Mountain is one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Kyrgyzstan with several notable spots including a 16th century mosque, a cave believed to have curative properties, the spot where fourteen-year-old Babur is said to have retreated for prayer and meditation, as well as the location where the Prophet Suleiman purportedly prayed and was buried.

[96] Ulugbek was primarily a painter. His work has been exhibited in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and in Moscow.

of the way the profuse, ambiguous, and varied usage of the term "modernity" in recent alternative modernities literature has resulted in a term that lacks analytical purchase. If "modernity" is to be more than an object of discursive investigation, more than a fashionable topic of inquiry but also an analytical tool, it must have a core set of traits that we can identify.

As argued in the introduction to the dissertation, the Soviet Union as modern has been important in some contemporary critical theorists' re-articulations of "the modern", especially in theories which emphasize the multiplicity of modernity but still attempt to delineate what modernity might be, S.N. Eisenstadt and Johan Arnason most notable among them. In taking an approach like Eisenstadt's or Arnason's we can see Mukadas's struggle as not only a variety of competing articulations/imaginations of the modern; rather, we see Mukadas and Soviet/post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan themselves as modern. From this starting point we can interrogate the contours and specificities of Soviet/post-Soviet modernity; understand their institutional forms; explore the ways the tensions barred out, were resolved or prompted collapse; and discover how the Soviet/post-Soviet projects shaped material and ideological landscapes. These are the landscapes of Mukadas's struggle, the landscapes that make her imaginations comprehensible.

It is the shared set of broad cultural traits analytically defined as the core of modernity – some of which, in Eisenstadt's articulation, are outlined in the introduction – as well as a narrower and particular body of social and political discourse on gender, modernity, religion, and the veil common to the West and the Soviet Union, that indicate why Mukadas's struggle mirrors those of Muslim women the world over. It is in this double sense – along with all the actual ties of people, goods, economies, and politics – that modernity is "a shared story" (Osella and Osella 2006: 569).[97] However, Mukadas's struggle diverges from those of other Muslim women because of the specificity of the Soviet/post-Soviet case.

Post-Soviet Changes – religion and modernity

Mukadas was thirteen when the Soviet Union collapsed. When asked about the changes in the early years, the first thing she recalled was how expensive everything had become. Others in her community around her age remember waiting in line for hours to acquire scarce resources. While

[97] It is likely that Osella and Osella would oppose my use of their terminology in a section which supports the idea of multiple modernities specifically because the article from which the quote is taken posits itself as against these kinds of interpretations. I intentionally did this to highlight that Eisenstadt in fact acknowledges the intertwined history of which Osella and Osella speak (on this point, see Eisenstadt's reply to Kahn in Kahn 2001).

they had similarly queued for items during the Soviet era, the difference with the early post-Soviet years was the dearth of even the most basic items like bread. Mukadas remembers that things were particularly difficult for her father. As an artist, he had received regular payment for his work during the Soviet period. These payments ended with the demise of the Soviet Union; the ensuing economic crisis meant that there was no demand for his paintings. Mukadas's father did not live through the collapse of the union and the ensuing economic and political chaos. He died in 1994 under mysterious circumstances. Despite the double shock and hardship of personal loss and societal collapse, Mukadas's mother worked out a modicum of economic success through gold trading – she bought and sold jewelry – an activity she'd been active in for at least ten years. The girls thrived in the seemingly inhospitable environment and grew up to be well-liked and respected young women.

Mukadas talked of her father often. Though in the years just preceding his death there had been friction between her and her father – mostly as a result of Mukadas's burgeoning independence – she remembered her father tenderly. Mukadas recounted how he taught her about the nature of life and how she should live it. She talked very pointedly about wanting to be a cultured person, about wanting to better herself, to be intelligent, and well-read. She was pleased with the freedoms of the post-Soviet period, especially freedom of conscience and personal independence. She said that only since the end of the USSR were people learning to think for themselves, rather than listening to the dictates of others.

Mukadas's positive evaluation of the post-Soviet period expressed her satisfaction more with the change –with the loosening of certain unsavory elements of the USSR – than with an endorsement of the new forms of political, economic, societal, and moral organization that had replaced that of the socialist era. Her actual encounter with the realities of post-Socialist life however provoked more disillusionment and disappointment than celebration. Dreams and values nurtured in the Soviet period were accompanied by institutional arrangements that provided for their possible fruition. Socialist ideals of modernity were possible to enact, even if they were never fully attainable. As Frances Pine argues, during the socialist period criticism of the system often focused on the incompleteness of certain socialist projects, the way flaws in the system and extensive corruption blocked full implementations of socialist programs (1996: 133 - 134). The criticism was not with the ideals and programs but their incomplete fruition. There was thus, a sense that not only could some dreams be reached – for example the education and employment of women, along with their full participation in society – but the system could be changed to make the implementation of these ideals more complete. However when these same dreams and values were set in the radically different social, political, and economic context that we may

loosely term "capitalist," access to their fulfillment was largely blocked. In Mukadas's case, the severity of the economic situation blocked her access to the kind of (Soviet) modern life she dreamed of. Few jobs, absence of child care, lack of money and access to the "quality goods" her mother had always taught her to value, Mukadas was constantly frustrated by the mismatch of her dreams and her realities.

As socialism decayed and the second world opened Western "specialists" rushed in with plans to develop the newly independent nations, their ill-conceived schemes often met with little success, not least because they attempted to modernize a population that was, in its own eyes, already modern (Creed and Wedel 1997: cf. Arnason 2000). Undoubtedly many inhabitants of the former socialist countries sought, with a future-oriented gaze, the material prosperity that Western forms of modernity promised, especially in light of the economic chaos of the early post-Socialist period. In the early 1990s Kyrgyzstan elected for "shock therapy" hoping that radical transformation of political and economic structures would secure massive international funding, hastening the "transition" to an imagined "capitalism of affluence." The harsh realities of liberal capitalism and the market economy didn't take long to set in as the "transition" faded from view and poverty did not abate. Even regional analysts, in light of actually existing capitalism, altered their interpretation of changes in the region. "The concept of transition, though it has not disappeared completely, has been increasingly replaced by less teleological terms such as "transformation" and "consolidation" (Giordano and Kostova 2002: 74). Hopes for a prosperous "modern" future abounded, but they were coeval with nostalgia for an equally modern, if different, past (Pine and Berger 1998).

Importantly, the hopes for a modern future were qualitatively different from the longing for the modern past. Actually lived socialist modernity was characterized by infrastructural improvement, scientific advancement, a certain ethos of community and communal effort to create a new, superior society, and, importantly, a set of values – gender equality, mass literacy, economic equality and meaningful work for all – that were, if only partly, attainable. Post-socialist modernity, by contrast, was not about lived experiences and values – it was almost exclusively about dreams. These were dreams of Western consumption and material standards of living that not only didn't fit the logics of Soviet life, but were rather unattainable in the economic realities of post-Socialist life.

As a part of its "shock therapy" Kyrgyzstan embraced freedom of conscience and allowed for the growth of multiple religious communities, including scripture-oriented Muslims. While Christian and Muslim missionaries certainly took advantage of Kyrgyzstan's liberal policies, in places like Bazaar-Korgon, the local *ulama* facilitated the expansion of Islam more directly. As

the number of newly pious in the community increased, their alternative visions, articulations and representations of Muslimness sparked communal debate over religious observance and doctrine specifically but also over wider notions of religion and politics. Changing modes of veiling and the increased public visibility of these new forms played a prominent role in these discussions. By wearing headscarves and dresses that more fully covered their bodies, women like Mukadas presented a challenge to community members who read their actions as reversals of one of the biggest triumphs of Soviet modernizing campaigns – women's emancipation. It raised the question of whether veiling and modernity were compatible or whether the new forms of veiling signaled a reversal of Soviet modernity.

"Girls" in Bazaar-Korgon almost universally do not veil, "women" do, the transition being marked by marriage. When a girl marries she receives a *sep (*trousseau) which includes an array of new clothing and headscarves. New brides (*kelen)* have their own style of veiling. They wear their headscarves midway on their heads; half of their head is exposed. They tie their scarves loosely at the nape of the neck and carefully arrange the ends over their shoulders. For those with a generous *sep*, every outing from their new homes is an opportunity to display their collection of new dresses and scarves. As women age, they cover more and more of their hair. A woman aged 30 to 40 places the headscarf much closer to her hairline, still tying it at the nape of her neck. However, it is also common for professional women to only veil at home, if ever.

As a woman reaches 50 and beyond, the scarf is often worn lower on the forehead. Eventually many old women (nearing 60) will add a second scarf on top of the first that is draped loosely and crosses across the chest or under their chin. The scarf covers their shoulders and is often left untied. Another manner of veiling for older women mimics the *paranji* which some wore in their youth. They use shirts and coats of male relatives, hang them loosely over the heads, leaving them open in front. When they pass a man on the street, they draw together the sides of the garment, concealing themselves within. This manner of veiling was what many women used following the *hujum.* The evolution of scarf wearing is seen as part of the aging process – i.e., that one becomes more religious with age.[98]

There are other local forms of veiling which ostensibly index a woman's religious commitment and are not exclusively for the elderly. The first involves placing the scarf over the hairline and loosely tying it in a knot below the chin. The second involves wrapping the loose ends of the scarf around the neck and tucking them into the collar. Women who tie their headscarves in this manner wear the same style of dresses in the same fabrics as other women in

[98] Perhaps it is inaccurate to label this a 'local' notion as the idea is held elsewhere, for example throughout the former Soviet Union and in Turkey.

the community, but theirs have longer sleeves. Many of these women are of lower socio-economic levels. Their clothing is not considered flashy, fashionable or generally eye-catching. In short, while they may tie their headscarf differently and cover their body more fully, they do not stand out and are not perceived of as "different" from women of the same socio-economic status. Their religious devotion, as expressed through dress, goes unnoticed.

The final cluster of veiling styles found in Bazaar-Korgon is what is known outside the region as *hijab* or *niqab*. In the first, all the hair and neck is covered but the entire face is revealed. In the second, either half or all the face is covered. The *hijab* is most common and is most rapidly spreading. The word *hijab* is not locally used for head scarves of that style, not even by the women who wear them. Instead, people generally talk about women who have "closed their headscarves" (*joluk japdi)* or who "wear their headscarves like *this*" (*joluk mundai slanip jürüt). Hijab* is used locally to indicate the over-coat–like garment local women have seen non-Central Asian Muslim women wearing. Very few women in town wear this form of dress. Most commonly, the hijab-as-headscarf is combined either with long-sleeved, loose fitting dress found or made in Bazaar-Korgon or one of the proximal cities. However, these clothes are of a different style and with differently printed fabrics than the majority of dress in town.

Although these dresses and headscarves are mainly locally produced, the manner in which they are worn, the kinds of colors, fabrics and clothing combinations that are chosen, and the fact that they are all worn by young women (under 40 years of age) raises eyebrows in the community. They are not viewed as local forms of dress or veiling. When a young woman wears a *hijab* she is automatically assumed to take part in a locally new cluster of religious practices – attending religious study groups, learning to recite the Quran, and regular prayer. For example, not long after she began wearing the *hijab*, Mukadas met a small group of neighbor girls who asked her if she could recite the Quran. When she replied that she could not, the girls respond a bit shocked, "But you wear your headscarf like that!"

Women who do not wear the *hijab* but instead veil in local styles of more covered veiling, generally do so out of religious conviction as well. Yet they draw little attention in public and are not indicated in discussions concerning rising levels of religiosity. When people in town talk about women who have "turned and gone to religion" (*dinge burulup getkin)* or who have come "closer to religion" (*dinge jakin)* they never indicate these women. Instead, they point to women wearing a *hijab*. Or, if they are discussing the issue in private, they simple say "women who wear their headscarves like *this*", tracing an oval with two fingers around their faces, beginning at the forehead, following the curve of their face and meeting just below the chin.

The *hijab* then is for many communities members not just a conspicuously novel form of head-covering, it is one that signals religious commitment and is thus, not only in style but in meaning different from the other forms of head covering. While a certain degree of religious commitment is acceptable, wearing the *hijab*, as a perceived part of being "close to religion," is also closely associated with excessive religious fervor. The association has multiple roots. First, the *hijab* is locally understood to be an "Arab" form of dress and often associated with Wahhabis. As argued in chapter three, in Central Asia, the word "Wahhabi" became synonymous with "extremist" in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Babadjanov and Kamilov 2001; Shahrani 2005). More recent global deployments of the term have given it new saliency, especially when those authorizing discourses on Muslim extremists – the US, Russia, and China – all hold tremendous influence in Kyrgyzstan and use this influence to push Kyrgyzstan into a "tougher stance" in its anti-terrorism measures. On a local level, residents of Bazaar-Korgon were acutely aware that there must be "extremists" in their midst. As they gossiped about this supposed threat, they often speculated on who might be a "terrorist." The *hijab* was often a sign that someone may have become an extremist (McBrien 2007).

But the contemporary use of the term carries weight precisely because it was consonant with Soviet era notions in which the veil had come to symbolize the supposed oppressive, backward, and fanatical nature of Islam. The veil was thus doubly dangerous for residents – it indicated excessive religious commitment and a departure from the norms and practices of gender equality established during the Soviet era. It thus signaled a retreat of Soviet modernity. I was told on several occasions by female friends of mine, especially those in their 40s and 50s, that women who "wear their headscarves like *that*" were backward and unmodern. They often believed they women had been coerced into the practice. Even some men questioned the women's motives for veiling, wondering why they would have given up their freedom (see also McBrien and Pelkmans forthcoming 2008).

Community perception was not the only thing that delayed women from veiling. Women were usually confronted with difficult material circumstances that made them postpone their decision. The vast majority of women choosing to wear the *hijab* were relatively young. They wanted to set themselves apart from the old women who veiled more fully. They were also keenly interested in fashion and beauty, especially in light of all the products and images that had entered the region in the post-Soviet period. Yet, for those wishing to wear the *hijab*, there weren't many clothes available. Some young women had special clothes made for them by local seamstresses. Even then, the selection of fabric in town was not great. Others traveled to nearby cities to search for garments that would meet their needs. But the garments they found in these locations were

often not attractive. Finding something that covered them, and was beautiful, was a great challenge. One unique solution to this was "importing" veils from abroad. Women who went on the hajj occasionally brought back scarves and other clothing for their family, friends and acquaintances. But the number of women doing this was limited. There was not even a special stall at the bazaar to cater to these women's needs and foreign traders had yet to capitalize on this niche in the market.

While the newly pious may not have been able to overcome all the stereotypes surrounding the *hijab*, their attempts at beautiful, fashionable veiling at least challenged some. Beautiful veiling for young women went against the grain concerning local aesthetics of the veil and its role in the life-cycle of women. They attempted to reconfigure it not as "tradition" from the pre-Soviet past, but as contemporary and in line with new visions of modernity. In their search for beauty and fashion, these young women often employed images of Western modernity which they were seeking to blend with their religious devotion. Perhaps an even greater challenge to young women's veiling was economics: most women simply did not have the resources they needed to wear the kind of clothing they wanted. This dilemma was particularly intense for women who chose to wear the *hijab* after marriage, because their wish to dress "religiously" meant that had to give up their trousseau (*sep*) as the garments that came as a part of the *sep* were not designed for hijab-wearing women.

The economic constraints were the downside of the new-capitalist modernity. Post-Soviet life, in a sense, forced Kyrgyzstani citizens to face the dark sides of Western modernity while simultaneously being flooded with its promises and desires. This disjuncture in many ways stimulated longing for the Soviet era – for its perceived security, morality, and stability. Post-Soviet citizens were nostalgic, but not blindly so. They had not forgotten the negative aspects of the Soviet system. But for many, the balance between good and bad seemed a bit better then than now.

Throwing Stones at Fruitful Trees: the story of Mukadas Kadirova

There was a black and white photograph at the Kadirova home which showed a young woman standing on the Red Square, the onion domes of Saint Basil's Cathedral behind her. Her hair was braided and she had a small square hat (*doppa*) on her head. She wore a smart dress of Uzbek atlas that fell just above her knees. She smiled. The Kadirova sisters loved to look at that photograph of their mother. Through it they could imagine their mother as a young girl – someone like themselves. But they also commented on how differently their mother's youth had

been – more opportunities to travel, an easier life with more hope for the future. Their life was different. Especially the eldest among them had been steeped in the discourse of becoming intelligent, modern people who were part of the great Soviet project. But these were dreams that they, unlike their mother, were unable to realize. Taught by their parents that education was the key to a fruitful, modern life, these values and degrees depreciated in post-Soviet life.

Even though, as argued, the rhetoric of communist modernity was never an accurate reflection of the realities of Soviet life, Soviet citizens were active participants in creating and sustaining the rhetoric and by and large felt part of its overarching goals. The dreams and values of the Kadirova sisters started in the Soviet era. Even after the collapse, their ideas, visions, and hopes were nurtured by family, teachers and community members who had matured during socialist times. As Martha Lampland has argued, rapid institutional change is rarely accompanied by equally swift alterations in people's ideas, habits, and opinions. Since people are embedded in durable social webs of affection, respect, obligation and reciprocity it "takes years of altered circumstances and new experiences to change the way people think and act" (2002: 32). As time passes notions are modified in light of new experiences, but the connection to the past, explicitly and implicitly, remains.

Memory of the past itself is altered by the shifting environment. Frances Pine argues that many of the positive achievements of the socialist states, especially in regards to gender equality, were not recognized until after the collapse when the contrast with real existing capitalist democracy, all too apparent, cast new light on former socialist realities (1996: 133). Thus in some cases, re-evaluation shores up and even strengthens notions created and sustained in a social and political environment that no longer exists. Furthermore, such notions can even be re-invigorated in the new environment when old and new rhetoric align. For example, the role of education in individual and societal advancement is central both to Soviet and Western discourses. Western campaigns on educational reform and massive foreign funding for study abroad programs consolidated the Soviet-cum-post-Soviet value of education. Unfortunately, the promises of education, partly obtainable in the Soviet years, are unattainable in contemporary Kyrgyzstan.

Three out of five of the Kadirova sisters attended university. The eldest did not study; she married soon after completing secondary school. The youngest hoped to attend university after two of her siblings had finished. The financial burden of three in university was too great. Despite their training – Mukadas in education, Delnura in border control, and Nigora in art – only one found employment in her chosen field. Mukadas worked as a teacher for one year, before leaving to have her first child. She never returned to work, partly because child care systems had broken down. Delnura's failure to secure work as a border guard shows another odd twist of the post-

Soviet period. Ironically, while Mukadas herself lauded the independence period as one where people were able to think critically and independently, the education system became even more riddled with bribery than it was during Soviet times. At university, everything could be bought for a price – admission, grades, test results, even diplomas. The practice continued into the job market such that, while Delnura was still able to earn her degree the old fashioned way – through studying – she could not pay the bribes necessary to secure work as a border guard or customs officer. Delnura pursued an alternative dream. In partnership with another young woman, she opened a small clothing stall in the Bazaar. Nigora and Nazima helped out as well. In the first few months of business they never made a profit. Nigora's study of art seemed rather hopeless from the outset.

In addition to fulfilling, well-paid work the sisters all longed for love, good husbands, kind mother-in-laws, and nice homes. They all wanted children. Mukadas had some of these desired things. Unlike most of her age cohorts, she had married the young man she'd fallen in love with. Despite the fact that she'd made her own choice in a marriage partner, had been permitted to do so by her mother, and had chosen her partner on the basis of love, her marriage and marital life had not been easy. Her husband and in-laws were considerably less-well educated than her own family. They were also quite poor. This variance, combined with a mother-in-law who Mukadas described as unkind, critical, and who looked unsympathetically on Mukadas's less-than-robust constitution, made for a difficult home life for Mukadas.

The difficulties Mukadas faced at home were, in the end, one of the major impetuses in her religious awakening. In 2002 Mukadas had a dream in which one particular difficulty she was having with her mother-in-law and husband were replayed. In the dream, she explained, the trials in her home life manifested themselves in the form of a snake which, coiled around her body, was constricting and killing her. She called on Allah to rescue her from the snake and he instructed her that she must pray and come "closer to religion" (*dinge jakin)* to find relief from her turmoil. She took the dream literally and began to pray five times a day. Around the same time, her husband had also had a self-described religious awakening. He had also begun to pray. As time went on he began to attend a Quranic study group where he learned to recite the Quran and received religious instruction. Mukadas likewise had begun to learn more about Islam by visiting a female religious specialist (*atincha*).[99]

One warm afternoon in early fall 2003, Mukadas and I sat in her mother's small orchard and talked. She told me she was considering wearing the hijab. Her husband had brought up the

[99] An *atincha* is a female religious specialist who, among other things, teaches women to recite the Koran, instructs them about their Islamic duties, and offers advice.

subject some months before. Mukadas told him she was not ready at that moment. However, she agreed to think about it. She had been considering it for some time and decided that she was nearly ready to do it. She felt sure that it was her duty before Allah and her responsibility as a Muslim woman. At the same time she was unsure of herself because, as she explained, she wanted to be a modern woman. She considered herself different from many other young women who attend Islamic study groups. "They finished 9th form and after that they stayed at home. They go to the *atincha* and return home. That's it. They don't think, they don't question. But I am modern, I am educated."

Mukadas decided to wear the hijab, though she postponed her veiling until late fall. It would be easier, she explained, because in fall and winter one wore long sleeves anyway. She wouldn't have to buy any new clothes to fit her new mode of dress. She would only have to change the way she pinned her scarf. Mukadas's husband was pleased with her decision as were her mother-in-law, her mother, and two of her sisters. All three girls had become "interested in religion" (*dinge kyzyktuu bolop kaluu).* The three sisters had prayed *namaz* when they were younger. Mukadas had returned to it in 2002, Nigora in 2003. Nazima was learning how from Nigora. Mukadas's husband often brought home religious audio cassettes from the bazaar. Mukadas shared them with her sisters. She and her sisters discussed the tapes and debated religious issues. When Mukadas began wearing the hijab, Nigora and Nazima offered her advice on how best to style it. They accompanied her to the bazaar to buy a new winter head scarf. Mukadas and the girls were excited at how fashionable it was. Delnura, on the other hand, was upset with her decision. Delnura told her sister "What matters is what you believe on the inside, and how you treat others. That is more important then what you wear on the outside. Veiling is for old women. We are modern," she said

As the winter wore on Mukadas had her doubts about the new scarf. She'd taken to wearing an older, pink one. She thought it suited her face better. Her sisters and mother chided her that it was out of fashion. Mukadas was hurt by their comments and discussed her feelings with me. She was angered at their focus on "things". She argued that clothes and other material objects were not important. She said that Allah teaches people to look at others and be thankful for what they have. "When we think about religious knowledge, we should look ahead to those who have more than us so that we may strive forward to have what they do. When we think about the things of this world, we should look behind to those who have less so that we are thankful for what we have and so that we may share with them, through *zakat".*

Though Mukadas had thought through many of the potential consequences of her changed mode of dress, and was certain of the correctness of her decision, she nonetheless felt the tensions

of competing visions and desires. She wanted to veil, but to do so fashionably and with good quality clothes. This was motivated by her appreciation of beauty, as an attempt to overcome Soviet-era notions that marked more fully-covered forms of veiling as for the old, and as a desire to participate in lures of a newly consumption-saturated environment. However, her poverty, the dearth of locally available goods, and her own interpretation of the overly consumption-oriented attitudes of her family as not in-line with proper Muslim behavior counteracted her own desires of beauty.

One afternoon in late spring, I opened the door to the small, sunny room to see four of the five Kadirova sisters preening in front of the mirror. Nigora was telling her sisters about the *eskicha* girls she'd met while she'd been in Osh.[100] She described the beautiful headscarves and dresses the *eskicha* girls wore, demonstrating the ways they tied, pinned, folded, and fastened their scarves. The sisters were excited; they took turns experimenting with the veiling styles Nigora demonstrated. As Nigora helped her older sister Mukadas with one particularly complicated arrangement, she complemented Mukadas on her new headscarf and dress. Mukadas had just purchased what would be her spring and summer attire in a town nearby. It had cost her dearly and she still felt uncertain about the purchase. Seeing her sister's delight in her dress, Mukadas went to the other room, took the garment off, and let her sister try it on. As Nigora and her other sisters arranged the dress and coordinated scarf, Mukadas stood beside me and sighed. "Fashion comes last to Bazaar-Korgon," she ruminated.

At that moment, as they preened before the mirror the girls minds were on fashion and the most stylish ways to wear the veil. Of the four sisters experimenting with veiling styles, only one, Mukadas, actually wore a headscarf. Yet the lure of "dress-up"- of imagining how one would look, and be, if she were another; of searching for new ways to look beautiful – had tempted them all, even Delnura. Mukadas was certainly concerned with how the veil made her look. It must be beautiful but it must properly cover her. The dual role of her new clothing expressed two of Mukadas's desires – to be lovely and obedient. But, as Mukadas's comment about fashion in Bazaar-Korgon revealed, there were many restraints on becoming a fashionable, pious young woman.

Despite her sister's validation concerning the beauty of the new dress and headscarf she'd just bought, Mukadas waited almost two weeks before wearing it in public. It was quite different from anything she'd worn before, she said. She explained that the new form of dress made her

[100] Literally translated, *eskicha* means "old language". It is a common way of referring to the Arabic language. People who are learning to recite the Koran or who attend Islamic study groups in Kyrgyzstan are said to be studying *eskicha*. It is assumed that these people are 'religious'.

decision to wear the hijab more real. It set her apart more demonstrable from other women in town. She was nervous. The dress and hijab did indeed draw more attention to her. She began to hear people whispering about her as she walked about town. She'd spoken to an *atincha* about her difficulties. The woman advised Mukadas to count the difficulties as tests from Allah.

One afternoon she had a particularly unsettling experience. As she was walking through the bazaar a woman approached her, stared her in the face and said "I hate women who cover themselves." Mukadas walked away. She ignored the woman and went to see her husband who worked in the bazaar. "When I told him what had happened, I felt very happy. I knew it was a test from Allah. The woman only said what she did for one of two reasons. One, she wanted to cover herself and knew she couldn't. Two, she really liked my clothes, thought I looked beautiful, and thus tried to push me down to make herself feel better." Mukadas's confidence grew. She recalled a proverb "*No one throws stones at a tree that does not bear fruit.*" She reasoned that the difficulties were a sign of her obedience; she must be bearing the fruit of her devotion.

As the spring and summer wore on, Nigora, Mukadas's sister, talked more frequently about veiling as well. It would be a particularly big step for her as she was unmarried. Veils for unmarried women were even more scandalous. Delnura cautioned her to wait at least until she was married. "Even then," Delnura warned "people will think you are an extremist. But it will be worse if you do it before you marry." Nigora decided to wait, though not necessarily until she married. She said she needed the time to purchase the right clothing. She wanted to have a whole wardrobe ready before she started veiling.

Nigora's approach was much more practical in many ways than Mukadas's. If Nigora decided to veil before marriage, she'd ask her mother to have all the clothes in her *sep* suited for the new manner of dress. Mukadas on the other hand had a closet full of clothes she couldn't wear. One afternoon Mukadas modeled many of her *sep* dresses for me. She sighed as she looked at them. She loved them so much, she said, but they simply weren't right. The sleeves were too short, the necks to low, or the length not enough. She figured she could wear them at home, but that seemed unwise as they would so quickly become worn and stained from her household chores.

Despite her desires for beauty, Mukadas chose to veil first and foremost in obedience to Allah and in an effort to ease familial tensions. Yet, she feared not being allowed back to work, she faced public admonishment, and she felt the weight of unheard, but nonetheless felt, community gossip. But what she also feared was a change in her status as a modern woman. Not only had she confronted the stereotypes of her community which equated wearing the *hijab* with extremism and with the overturning of Soviet era-notions of gender equality, but she dealt with an

internal struggle of redefinition. In some ways, Mukadas too saw the *hijab* as anti-modern–as a symbol of backwardness, of the uneducated, of a tradition given up long-before the period of modernity in which she lived.

But, as her story also illustrates, modernity had become a more complex thing since the fall of the USSR. Thus, while she dealt with certain tensions inherent in veiling and being modern – tensions provoked by centuries of Western and Soviet/Russian interpretations of the veil – she simultaneously drew on new interpretations of the *hijab* and modernity which had entered her community and, importantly, she created her own. Post-Soviet emphasis on consumption and the importance of exteriority, fashion, and youth had informed her desires to veil beautifully, but the emptiness of Western consumption and the perceived immorality of the post-Soviet period had forced her to reconcile these desires with the principles for ethical conduct she found in Islam. And, while Mukadas had not completely reconciled consumption with certain values in Islam, her attempts to veil fashionably nonetheless counteracted community notions that the headscarf was ugly and/or only for the old, redefining the veil in regards to at least one stereotype of modernity

It may be that when Mukadas, and other women like her seek to come "close to religion" (*dinge jakin)* – whether through veiling or other techniques – and attempt to reconcile this move with redefined notions modernity they implicitly confront one of the greatest tensions between Soviet and Western modernity in the region. The Soviet version of modernity in Central Asia, however incompletely, encompassed individual desires as well as societal ones; succeed in providing institutional means to obtain these goals; and provided a framework of morality to encompass the goals and the institutions. Despite its imperfections, it was more inclusive and coherent than the fragmented, disembodied, desire-focused yet-unattainable visions of Western modernity circulating in Kyrgyzstan since the fall of the USSR. Mukadas's attempt to re-interpret modernity, to create herself as obedient, modest, modern, educated, and "close to religion" – in short her creation of an Islamic modern – , may be an antidote to these Western projects. Fashionable veiling intertwines with Western consumption while correcting its perceived immorality. If, as Mahmood rightly urges, the veil is about more than "women's (un)freedom", it can equally be about more than creating piety (2005: 195).[101] Mukadas certainly understood her veiling as a pious act and one that was transforming her inner-dispositions, but her conception of what "the veil was performing" (*ibid*) was not limited to this.

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[101] For a similar argument see Marsden 2005:251-252.

Conclusion – modernity in the past

Contemporary Kyrgyzstan is not simply a place *still* transitioning to modernity, nor retreating from it. It is a place, like many the world over, were multiple modernities compete. But these various competing *contemporary* visions of the future also struggle with dreams of the *past* held by a people who were already modern, and who now, confronted with decay, must revise their notions. While during the post-Soviet period, Mukadas considered *herself* to be modern, her society had decayed into a state of "post-Modernity." She found herself confronted with Western images of the modern (centered on consumption, but also education) that had no connection to realities of post-Soviet life. In fact, other than the bright images of Western modernity, it was its dark side that had more keenly affected her landscape. This gap promoted longing for the past when not only she, and her family, were modern but her society as well. Following Rofel and her study of modernity in China after Socialism, we can see how this kind of nostalgia served equally to critique the present and prompt an alternative imagination of the future (1999: 128 - 131). At the same time, Mukadas's religious turn – which was at odds with both Soviet and contemporary Western notions of gender equality and proper, moderate, religious behavior – necessitated yet another rethinking of the contentious concept. Mukadas's was a complicated, multilevel dilemma; it was an attempt to re-align and reinterpret the competing frameworks and material circumstances so that she could be a modern, veiling Muslim woman.

In the introduction to a 2002 edited volume on modernity, Bruce Knauft provides an overview of anthropological inquiry on the modern and its situation within the larger genesis of Western sociological thought on the topic. He usefully defines modernity as "the images and institutions associated with Western-style progress and development in a contemporary world" (2002: 18) and indicates that modernity takes on different guises in different world areas (2002: 4). However, in light of Mukadas's struggle, and the role of the Socialist world as modern, it may be that one aspect of anthropological analysis on modernity still needs to be critically analyzed. Knauft argues that the book "addresses the issues that surround the process of **being** or **becoming** differently modern" (emphasis mine). My question is, what happens when we seek to interpret people who see themselves as **having been**, as **being**, and as in need of **becoming** modern?

Knauft provides an interesting figure in which he attempts to map out the alternative modern as "the articulatory space through which notions of modernity and tradition are co-constructed as progress and history in the context of culture and political economy" (2002: 26). Here traditional/subaltern culture and political economy are juxtaposed with the modern/dominant version in a chart which shows the processual nature of the alternatively

modern. However, how would this model relate at all to Mukadas's experience? While she certainly has a notion of tradition it is one of a past long-removed, one which occurred before – and was molded by – the Soviet era. Similarly she must position herself with reference to the dominant capitalist political economy and its incumbent culture. But where would the Soviet era – Mukadas's most immediate referent and source of contrast with the dominant vision of modernity – fit on such a schema?

I suggest that despite our attempts to overcome our own "modernity" in anthropological writings, we still too strongly reflect a forward-looking thinking in our analysis. We end up with tradition behind us, modernity ahead, and the modern as the present. But is this the complete story? When James Ferguson charted the social experience of decline in the Zambian Copperbelt, he not only described the decline, but offered means of interpreting the nonlinear, non-teleological trajectories he studied. In this way he critiqued the notion of progress and development found not only in modernization theory, but in much ethnography of developing countries. My argument parallels his attempt to "follow a range of reactions and strategies that shift over time in ways that do not sustain a simple linear narration" (Ferguson 1999: 20). However, I argue that in Kyrgyzstan it is not just a matter of seeing a modernity that was almost achieved, but rather one that was realized. Diverging from Ferguson, I see the contemporary situation in Kyrgyzstan not merely as one of decline. While there is this sense especially regarding reduced living standards and the loss of societal modernity, the fact that Mukadas nonetheless sees herself as still modern despite the changed circumstances and attempts to create a new type of modernity – which incorporates Soviet, Western, and Islamic elements – signals that the experience of modernity is not a matter just moving towards or away from something. The experience can be simultaneously one of loss, one of fulfillment, and one of desire– modernity as past, present, and future.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Public Islam and Muslims

The newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon are a category of people who adhered to canonical interpretations of Islam which for them necessitated participating in a set of practices such as wearing the *hijab*, praying five times a day, attending the mosque, participating in study groups, and proselytizing. They also approbated a discourse which indicated that "Muslim" was an inherently, and almost exclusively, *religious* identity. In Bazaar-Korgon, the newly pious were by and large Uzbeks although as I explained in chapter two this was just as much related to their socio-economic status in the Soviet period as it was to anything "specifically Uzbek." Generally speaking, during the Socialist era Uzbeks in Bazaar-Korgon were semi-urbanized peasants while the Kyrgyz were mid-to-highly educated, white-collar, professionals. The Uzbeks were therefore less monitored by state authorities and less dependent on the adherence to and articulation of state discourses to access jobs, resources, and social rewards. The Kyrgyz on the other hand were more closely monitored by state authorities, more dependent on the proper articulation of official discourses, and more likely to be supportive of the official rhetoric and system. This is not to say that Uzbeks were subversives. As Kandiyoti has argued, if we compare the contemporary Middle East and Central Asia through the rubric of post-colonialism, one of the most striking differences is "the diffusion of the fruits of Soviet development to the lower strata of society" (2002: 295). But there was nonetheless a marked difference between peasants and elites, especially in regards to the penetration of secular notions of religion and politics. Moreover, unlike Uzbeks whose genealogies indicated long-term residence in the community, Kyrgyz arrived in the town in the 1970s and 1980s and thus were distanced from their extended families. Familial networks were a primary means for the transmission of religious knowledge and practices during the Soviet era.

Generation was another important demographic factor which indicated dispositions regarding canonical Islam in the 2000s. Those who were born and grew to maturity in the Soviet era were more troubled by aspects of the canonical interpretations than the youth. While people of the older generation varied in their degree of participation in certain practices like prayer, fasting, or abstention from alcohol, they did have a remarkably similar view when it came to conceptions

of religion and culture, especially regarding notions of Muslimness. The ideas articulated by the newly pious challenged these Soviet era notions and were thus discomforting to older generations (but not as strongly if they were members of the *ulama*).[102]

The stories told by Zeba (chapters four and seven), Gulmira (chapter six), or even the story of the 28th mosque (chapter five), demonstrate that the categories 'newly pious' and 'others,' on which I have drawn in this dissertation, are highly complex and partly ambiguous. That is precisely one of the reasons why I included their stories – to make the point that most people have multiple points of reference indicating a hybridization of identity that defies simple categories. In anthropological literature it has become a truism that 'identity' is flexible, contingent on context, and multi-layered (Baumann 1996). Instead of ending with this truism, perhaps the most interesting questions to be asked in any study of identification are: 1) what are the constrains on an individual's ability to create his/her identity? 2) When do people explicitly reject the fluidity of identification and draw strict(er) boundaries between themselves and others? More concretely, why are people in Bazaar-Korgon drawing boundaries around the newly pious?

The discussion of the Soviet era and the impacts its modernizing campaigns had on notions of Muslimness, religion, politics, and modernity demonstrated some of the legacies which helped create the constraints within which the newly pious operated. The Wahhabi discourse likewise is an example of one of the biggest restrictions on the construction of religious identities and religious space in the post-Soviet period. The reaction that many townspeople had to the newly pious, their discourses, actions, and institutions reveal an instance of boundary drawing, as the discussion of terminology about the newly pious in chapter two demonstrates. Why did this boundary drawing become increasingly important? First, because it dealt with one of the most foundational markers in people's processes of identification: religious, ethno-national identity. Second because the interpretation of Islam advocated by the newly pious was seen as a return to "antiquated" pre-Soviet life. Third, because religion's public presence and its "potential threat" were so palpable for residents.

John Peel's argument concerning the role of truth and identity value in religious change (Peel forthcoming) seems particularly important for understanding the first reason why boundaries around the newly pious are being more strictly drawn. The religious turns of the

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[102] However, there were interesting differences between *ulama* who had reached maturity in the Soviet era and the 'up-and-coming' *ulama* who had lived the majority of their life in independent Kyrgyzstan. For example, the former had no problem interacting with non-kin related women on a day-to-day basis, while the latter were more uncomfortable with or avoided these interactions and showed less respect to and more contempt for women in positions of authority.

newly pious were largely results of truth searches. By and large, they were convinced there was a "real" or "true" Islam which had been lost to Central Asians over the Soviet Period and they set out to find it. The interpretation of Islam they found was one that necessitated certain practices and discourses, most prominent of which was that "Muslim" could not be understood merely as an ethno-national marker. Instead they asserted that "Muslim" should be thought of as a religious category. This articulation of Muslimness confronted those who adhered to Islam primarily for its (ethno-national) identity value. Their reading of Muslimness as an ethno-national marker did not stress adherence to certain modes of religiosity in the way that the scripture-based versions did. That is, to them Muslimness was less about "express[ing] the reality of things" than about who an individual perceived him/herself to be (Peel forthcoming: 15). There were thus two competing articulations of Muslimness vying for supremacy. One reason why the boundary between the two was being drawn at this particular moment was because of the exclusivity of the newly pious' definition; it invalidated other claims to the appellation Muslim.

Second, the boundary drawing was increasingly important because the discourses and practices of the newly pious were identified by many other residents as indicative of backwardness. These residents associated a turn toward scripture-based Islam with an accompanied loss of gender equality, secular public life, and to some extent "rational, scientific knowledge." At a moment when many other elements of Soviet modernity were seen as slipping away (chapter five), the additional loss of these virtues made the need to distance oneself from the newly pious even greater. Finally, the pejorative discourse on Wahhabism was central in prompting the self-reflexive differentiation between who was newly pious and who was not. Because the newly pious were understood to be Wahhabis, stricter boundaries needed to be drawn so that all would know who and who wasn't an 'extremist.'

And this point returns the discussion to the central issue of this dissertation – how 'apolitical' public Islam became politicized. It was not just that the newly pious' religiously-inspired discourses and practices challenged communal notions about Muslimness and the organization of social life, these discourses and actions were conceived of as backward, subversive, and threatening both to individuals, the local community, and the nation. The discourse on Wahhabis was a means of interpreting alternative articulations of Muslimness and Islam. When these alternative notions and practices became uncomfortable for residents – because they unsettled accepted modes of behavior like dressing styles or late-in-life religiosity, and altered or eliminated rituals such as weddings and other life-cycle events – the discourse on Wahhabis became a means of dealing with the confrontations the newly pious posed.

It could be argued that the discourse on Wahhabism is an ill-suited theme for the anthropology of religion – it elevates discourse over practice, looks at the ideas produced *about* the newly pious rather than the ideas they created, and focuses on the macro instead of the micro. But what I will argue in the remaining portion of the conclusion is that this dissertation shows how the two poles of each methodological binary are intertwined. Even though the call for such an approach is not new in anthropology, I argue that the "calls" for such research by, for example, Eric Wolf, Asad, and Appadurai, have not often been applied rigorously. Moreover, in constructing, criticizing, and modifying anthropological theory, the Central Asian experience has not been considered. This dissertation shows that there is an intriguing set of convergences and divergences between Central Asia and other areas of the world regarding the experience of modernity and religion. These patterns of similarity and difference help to refine our analytical categories and approaches.

Power and Modern Projects

In his 1999 work *Envisioning Power* Eric Wolf aimed to "trace out the ways in which relations that command the economy and polity and those that shape ideation interact to render the world understandable and manageable"(5 - 6). He focused his inquiry on what he called "structural power" or, what "[i]n Marxian terms refers to the power to deploy and allocate social labor" (*ibid:* 5). Examining three cases of massive change in structural power he argued that in each case "the people involved responded ideationally to perceived crises" (*ibid:* 17). The collapse of the socialist world certainly rivaled the economic, political, and societal changes that Wolf charted in his studies. And again, as in Wolf's cases, research in the former socialist world has shown that the massive shift in structural power has been accompanied by alterations in cosmology.[103] Mukadas's struggle to create herself as a modern veiling woman within the new structural power of a capitalist democracy reveals some of the ways these parallel shifts in political-economy and cosmology work. Following Wolf, my aim has been to show how meta-narratives and specific discourses are woven into the fabric of daily life, how they guided action, and how action created, altered, or reinforced them (see also McBrien 2006b). I have demonstrated how the political projects of modernization enacted in Central Asia over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries were tied up with their concomitant cosmological ones. In short, I have shown the link between the material and ideological exercises of power.

[103] For example Humphrey's (2002) work on consumption or Ledeneva's (1998) study of *blat.*

The anti-religious campaigns of the early Soviet era clearly exemplify this interrelated field of discourse and action. The unveiling of women, the education of girls, the expanding employment opportunities for females accompanied points of view which understood the veil to be the symbol of Islam's backwardness and women's emancipation from it as one of the central nodes in the project of modernization. The acts of removing the veil and of labeling it backward created the power of anti-religious campaigners (and by extension of the Soviet State) and set the boundaries within which contests to these ideas and practices could be made. The anti-religious campaigns themselves should be seen as a broader exercise of power in which first Tsarist, and later Soviet, authorities attempted to consolidate their hold over a region which they hoped would make them politically and economically stronger. In the post-Soviet era the discourses remained – though changing incrementally – and formed the field within which new acts of veiling were made, interpreted, and contested.

The discourse on Wahhabis – being a part of broader, and longer running, narratives about the 'evils' of Islam and the dangers posed by Muslim radicals – was similar. It was an explicitly deployed discourse used to control a perceived political threat. But its long-term viability as a structuring narrative indicates its deeper significance in power relationship whereby secular authorities in the region are cast as benevolent and modern and Islam is depicted as a malignant, antiquated system of control and belief The discourse of Wahhabism was deployed by the state, by national media, but importantly also by a variety of actors in Bazaar-Korgon – from members of the ulama, to school teachers against religious actions, and from newly pious themselves looking for the Wahhabis, to university students reading the symbolism of the veil. This widespread use limited and constrained the actions of everyday life, even as actors retooled, reinforced, and redeployed the discourses.

Looking back to Wolf's argument, what is interesting is that despite the dramatic changes in structural power following the collapse of the Soviet Union there were minimal changes regarding notions of religion and politics in the early post-Soviet years, with the exception of the adaptation of "freedom of consciousness." Why? It may simply be because an ideational change was unnecessary in the early post-Soviet years either for day-to-day survival or for the legitimization and modality of the nation-state's power. There was a rise in religious observances in the early post-Soviet years – especially the fast at Ramadan – and many local leaders flaunted their participation in these rituals in an effort to shore-up legitimacy. But as inhabitants of Bazaar-Korgon indicated, these initial displays of religiosity on the part of leaders petered out. The advocacy of freedom of consciousness remained an important shift in official discourse and practice and one that certainly was necessary for legitimate rule – especially because it was part

of the broader cosmological alteration to Western notions of "individual freedoms and rights". However, the idea that politics should be free from religion and that the state should monitor this condition of secularity remained uncontested.

What *did* profoundly change is the degree and manner of control the various regimes exercised in their creation of secular public space – from the forced unveiling and execution of ulama in the Stalinist period as one of the strongest to the negative stereotyping and labeling of wedding speakers by school teachers in 2004 as an example of the weakest. The enactment of Stalinist era dictates on religion obviously differ in nature and effect from the gossip of school teachers about specific wedding speakers. But yet, there is a value in juxtaposing them.

First, since my focus has been on the creation and transformation of Muslim identity over the entire twentieth century as a means of interpreting the contemporary situation, understanding the variegated nature, enactments, and effects of power is crucial. Second, despite the tremendous differences between the stereotyping occurring in 2004 and the anti-religious measure of the 1930s, they both reflect articulations between state power and local dynamics, a crucial component to any study of power. Finally, they "hang together" as Asad puts it because despite all their differences the two examples both show "attempt[s] to construct categories of the secular and the religious in terms of which modern living is required to take place, and nonmodern peoples are invited to assess their adequacy. For representations of 'the secular' and 'the religious' in modern and modernizing states mediate people's identities, help shape their sensibilities, and guarantee their experience" (2003: 14)

My aim then has been, again following Asad, to analyze the modern project of secularity and to demonstrate the relationship of secular power – in its varied forms – to the formation of the concept of religion, the development and configuration of Muslim identity, the possibilities for religious action, and the connections between religion and politics over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In order to do this I have argued, following Verdery (2002) and Kandiyoti (2000), for the intentional study of the former socialist world as modern. Inclined towards definitions of modernity which recognize its diverse embodiments, which define a set of its core characteristics, and which attempt to ground the study of modernity in political-economy like those produced by Friedman (2002) and Donham (2002), I have nonetheless turned to critical theorists such as Eisenstadt (2000) and Arnason (2000) for formulations of modernity because of the undue emphasis the former authors place on capitalism in their definitions of modernity – which thereby unduly exclude the Soviet Union .

By classifying the Soviet Union as modern, and using modernity as an interpretive framework for studying religion in Central Asia, I found that Soviet modernization programs and

Western projects share a set of broad cultural traits analytically defined by Eisenstadt as the core of modernity (2000). Moreover there was a common set of structuring categories about religion as well as a narrower and particular body of social and political discourse on religion between the two powers. These convergences explain in part the congruent obsession regarding religious extremism sketched throughout the dissertation.

Despite the connections which link Central Asia to the history of modernity and partly explain convergences, the region has had a unique experience, namely Socialist modernity and, later, a collision with contemporary Western variants. The encounter with these two distinct overarching interpretations and political mobilizations of modernity shaped the contemporary religious landscape. The framework of multiple intersecting modernities provided the analytical framework for interpreting the specific developments in the region. It also helps explain why there are so many uncanny similarities – and yet important differences – between the experience of Muslims in Central Asia and those of Muslims in other parts of the world.

A recent volume edited by Hefner, R*emaking Muslim Politics,* includes chapters from twelve researchers looking at ten different regions. "The newly pious" was the term Hefner used in his introduction to the volume to talk about the main actors in the resurgence of public religion in the Muslim world. I adopted this term because his description of the newly pious and the resurgence paralleled the case of the newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon. Hefner argues "[m]ost of the newly pious were primarily interested in just what they claimed to be: religious study, heightened public devotion, expressing a Muslim identity, and insuring that public arenas were subject to ethical regulation. The key symbols of the resurgence were similarly pietistic: reciting the Qur'an, keeping the fast, wearing the veil, avoiding alcohol, giving alms" (2005: 21). Importantly, he notes that "In its early years, the resurgence was a profoundly *public* event, but not one that was especially *political* in any formal sense of the word" (*ibid.* emphasis original). But his "third feature" of the resurgence of religion, shows a divergence from the Central Asian case.

> The third feature … raises a more sobering question concerning its long-term political impact. In light of its scale and the competition among its promoters, it was inevitable that at some point religious entrepreneurs would move to channel the resurgence's social capital into political ends. The process was made all the more likely in that religious associations were among the few public arenas in which ordinary people could make their voices heard(2005:21)

Here the parallels with Kyrgyzstan end. The resurgence of Islam in Kyrgyzstan has not taken a political path in the way Hefner describes the pietistic movements in other areas. While during

the Soviet era many Western academics expected religiously motivated political movements to eventually challenge the authority of the Soviet regime, they did not. And in the early post-Soviet period, even if many would have categorized Kyrgyzstan as only *transitioning* to democracy (that is, not having 'reached' it yet), there was nonetheless ample room for collective public action on any number of platforms. The newly pious in Bazaar-Korgon have spoken about the reform of society but they have not taken collective or institutional action to bring this reform about. In fact, most newly pious speak of the religious turn of individuals as the means of reforming society. If Islam has become at all politicized in Kyrgyzstan, this is not due to political acts or discourses of the newly pious, but rather is rooted in the reaction of other Muslims in the community to the apolitical discourses and actions of the newly pious.

It is exactly these sorts of similarities and dissimilarities which reveal the connection of Central Asia to the broader modern history of religion and show the particularities of the Central Asian case. I made this argument most strongly in chapters five and seven. In the former I demonstrated the ways that Muslims of Bazaar-Korgon, are creating religiously textured, Muslim public space through a mosque construction project. The building itself was not the locus of the new public Islam, but rather the act of constructing it fostered religiously textured public life in another sense – cooperation, trust, and solidarity among community members working for the common good. Endeavors like these differ in important ways from those made by Muslims of Europe because of a novel mode of public life, and from Muslim majority societies because of the unique history of Islam and Muslims in the region. Public Islam is still a new phenomenon in Central Asia and thus it remains to be seen what kind of impacts these movements will have, but continued analysis of them will serve as important foils for theories based on what anthropologists and sociologist of Islam have found in either Muslim-majority or Muslim-minority contexts

Hand in hand with these material endeavors are the ideational ones by pious Muslims like Mukadas who re-conceptualize the notion of modernity in order to deal with the competing articulations and projects of modernization in the region. As illustrated in chapter seven, Mukadas's struggle with the veil reveals an odd similarity with the struggles faced by hijab-wearing women the world over. Like them, Mukadas's struggles not only with negative readings which associate her form of dress with religious extremism, but with a discursive environment that allows only one reading of the veil – as the symbol par excellence of Islam. Her struggle is against both of these, and against competing visions of modernity all of which entice and confound her. Her attempt to realign these through her veiling may signal the creation of a religious modern. Importantly, as I argued, contra the majority of anthropological articulations

about the experience of modernity, Mukadas's struggle shows that it can be understood by some as something of the past. In the scheme of things then, the past is not always the location of the traditional or primitive, it can also be one of an alternative modernity.

Open Systems

> "[…] cultural anthropology seems to be at a distinctive moment […] Elaborate theories we seem to have given up, but pregnant and sweeping concepts we seem to like. Masterful tropes unmaster our narratives. In this sense, the assertions of capitalism on one hand, or globalism on the other, are perhaps equivalent to the conceptualization of modernity in scale, suggestiveness, and – one might add – lack of precision" (Knauft 2002:34).

In the research for this dissertation I took what in some circles would be called a "classical" anthropological approach, in others an outdated, flawed one. I conducted my research in a single site. Moreover, throughout the dissertation I have argued strongly for the importance of 'the local' when interpreting Central Asian religious landscapes. My aim was not to do away with "pregnant and sweeping concepts" like globalism or modernity but to be precise about them in an ethnographically informed manner. Or at least to be precise about some of the processes collected under these concepts. In doing so, this dissertation speaks to two different bodies of literature, offering a critique of one through the theoretical insights of the other. Until now theories on religious life generally, and the functioning and influence of religious authorities specifically, in Central Asia have reified the entities and mechanisms of control and subjugation, ascribing near omnipotence to the former – the 'higher powers' (state and globalization) of control – and simple acquiescence or complete resistance, to the latter – the local. Following the insights of anthropological studies in other regions, I have argued for a more detailed picture of how power is exerted – be that the power of the state in the form of an Oblast official pressuring a Qazi to remove a popular religious figure, or the very real way the 'global flows' of discourses of religious extremism affect, and in turn are shaped by, the actors of a small Kyrgyzstani town. It is in this way I speak of the importance of the local as an analytical device which draws attention to the relative significance concrete actors in specific locations have in so-called 'state' or 'global' issues

If this dissertation takes anthropological insights now several decades old to re-read Central Asian religious landscapes, past and present, it must also be asked how these landscapes inform contemporary anthropological theory. Contemporary studies on place claim to have moved

beyond the confines of the nation-state, looking further a field for frames of reference and power regimes (e.g. Marcus 1995, Gupta and Ferguson 1992). It has been argued that globalization, if not having done away with the nation-state, has certainly reduced its influence on contemporary society. In order to deal with this globalized life, contemporary ethnography often takes as its object of inquiry trans-, inter-, or supra-, national phenomena, whether in the form of identities, ethnoscapes, or social, political, and religious movements. Global frames of reference, global politics, and global flows dominate current anthropological writing, answering, among others, Appadurai's 1996 call to reframe the anthropologist gaze. Multi-sited ethnography seems to be the norm of the day.

Yet, limiting ourselves only to Appadurai's work which arguably has been quite influential in rethinking anthropological methods, we see that even within his own call to a rather cosmopolitan anthropology, there is nonetheless careful attention given to the construction of locality within this 'new era' of globalism. What has been missing in many ethnographies of the global is exactly this kind of explication of how international connections work, how they affect small-scale settings and, conversely, how the actions, institutions, and discourses of actors impact, shape, even make the global. Perhaps that is because in analyzing 'the global' we are at a loss to find it. Where is it located? Following the flows through multi-sited research is one way of 'finding it'. But, as Candea argues, by moving our focus away from one site to many – a move that ostensibly frees us from what Gupta and Ferguson identified as "the isomorphism of space, place, and culture" (1992: 7) – we in fact merely replace an examination of one bounded, reified, seemingly holistic entity (the local) with another (the global) (Candea 2007).

This dissertation has not simply tried to show how 'the state' or 'the global' are connected to, affect, or shape a local setting but rather how the religious landscape of contemporary Bazaar-Korgon reveals the complexity of power struggles involving a variety of actors, institutions, and discourse from (spatially and temporally) near and far, with more and less clout in town, *raion, oblast,* national, international, and global arenas. Using the term 'the local' was an attempt to draw our gaze to specific actors and institutions. The local did not exist as a closed, static system which could be comprehended and represented in its totality any more than the global

But the question still remains, acknowledging the role and power of the local and using my construction of it as a "window into complexity" (Candea 2007), what the effects of "globalization" have been on Islam in Bazaar-Korgon. As outlined in chapters one and three, contemporary observers see Central Asian Islam as having been politicized and radicalized by foreign Islamists. I have argued that these conceptions are based on flawed understandings of Islam in the pre-Soviet and Soviet period which saw it as isolated, homogenous, and static.

Moreover, they presented rather unsatisfactory conceptualization of how "global" connections work. The religious landscape of Bazaar-Korgon has long (always?) been multi-vocal and has likewise long been dialectically shaped through its relationship with actors from "outside." Following Mandaville's exposition of the effects of globalization on the production of religious knowledge, what may be new to Bazaar-Korgon is the extent and immediacy of these connections, "the inception of 'globality' in the sense of consciousness of the world as a social space," and the way that "contemporary Islam [has become] the discursive terrain upon which any number of primarily geopolitical questions are contested" (2007: 113).

A Final Word – Change and continuity

Joel Robbins has recently argued that anthropology has long been fixated on cultural continuity rather than paying attention to dramatic ruptures and discontinuities. In his words: "Cultural anthropologists have for the most part either argued or implied that the things they study—symbols, meanings, logics, structures, power dynamics, etc.—have an enduring quality and are not readily subject to change"(2007: 9). Robbins asserts that this "deep structure of anthropological theorizing" is what has inhibited an anthropology of Christianity to emerge (*ibid*). While not engaging with his argument concerning the development of the subfield, I do wish to point out that on one level, Robbins' argument is inviting for anthropologists of the former Socialist world. There is perhaps no better contemporary example of massive discontinuity – economic, political, or social – than the collapse of socialism. Yet, even in instances like these where massive, abrupt change has occurred, there have likewise been longer processes of change and continuity involved.

I argued in chapter seven, for example, that Mukadas's struggle is not only rooted in the collision of contemporary visions of modernity – it also involves the continued saliency of Soviet era notions. Similarly, the nature of reactions to "new weddings" and wedding speakers, as discussed in chapter four, depended on generation and thus people's investment in discourses of the Socialist period. This pattern – ideas and cosmologies extending beyond the life of the power that perpetuated them or, conversely, of new notions gaining ground before they attain ascendancy and institutionalization – can be seen woven through the history of modernity and religion in Bazaar-Korgon. It's striking that just at the moment when residents of Bazaar-Korgon realized that structurally and technically the town was becoming modern (early 1980s), the processes which would eventually bring down the Soviet Union had already begun. Many articles on the former socialist world which start with 1991 fail to notice what has already been

thoughtfully argued, that the collapse of socialism had longer roots (e.g. Castells 1997: 33 - 42). Part of this elongated history of demise which extends back into socialist history is the demise of state enforced atheism. The 1987 religious reforms of Gorbacheav are the easiest example of the beginning of the end. The fact that the rise of variant scripture interpretations of Islam had their roots in religious and political processes of the 1970s, as discussed in Chapter 3, is another.

If we see that the end of the Soviet Union, and with it state socialism, actually started well before the final breakdown of the USSR, we should see another long continuity in another direction. The moment of grand rupture in 1991 did not immediately eliminate the influence of all the discourse, practices, and structures of the socialist period. Many of these continued on well into the post-socialist era again, as Mukadas's life history demonstrates. With this in mind, Peel's formulation of change and continuity given in his reply to Robbins is a more satisfying one. He argues that "Rather than treat this [change *or* continuity] as a dilemma that must be resolved one way or the other, is the real issue not to explore the complex ways in which continuity and rupture are combined in the production of cultural forms (see, e.g., Marshall 2006)?" (Peel 2007: 27).

Lines which might demarcate where change and continuity are occurring in Bazaar-Korgon are hard to detect. There was obviously a dramatic rupture when the USSR collapsed and Western oriented modes of political-economy came to materially and ideologically dominate Kyrgyzstan. Yet at the same time, when we look at public Islam in the 2003/2004 community – either as the return of religious discourse, actions, and actors to spaces theoretically accessible to all, or as religiously inspired collective action – there seems to be a sense of continuity between Soviet and Western notions concerning the evaluation of these forms of public Islam. Islam is the agent of change in this particular modern, secular story – an agent not altogether welcome. However, if one takes a broader historical perspective it is possible to trace a sense of continuity within the discursive tradition of Islam that goes back much further than any of the modern projects in the region. From this perspective, the political projects of modernity and secularization can be seen as the agents which dramatically changed the practices, conceptions, and institutions of Islam. We could shift focus indefinitely, always gaining new perspectives, always finding new frames of reference. My dissertation advances the study of Islam in Central Asia, the anthropology of Islam, and theories on religion and modernity in exactly this way: taking a novel viewpoint to revisit old questions. This is anthropology's strength. It gives you ground on which to see things from a different perspective, offering a window on complexity.

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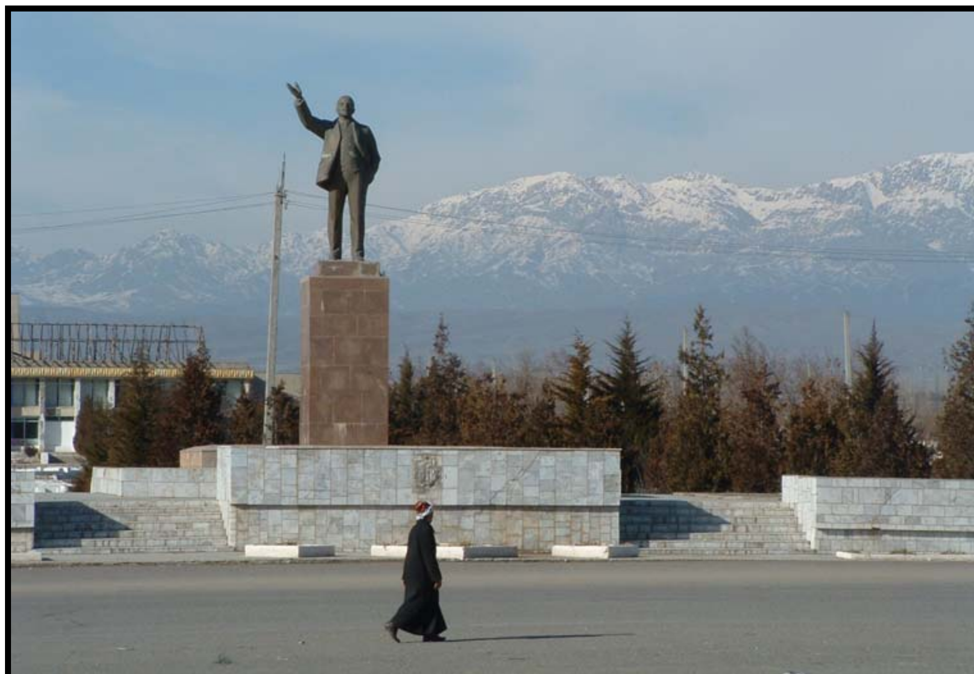

Statue of Lenin, Bazaar-Korgon, 2004

Bazaar-Korgonians wait for water

The Kyrgyz-language school built in the early 1980s

Bazaar-Korgon

The formerly prestigious apartment buildings

Forced to forsake their professions because of unemployment,
these taxi drivers wait for the precious little business that comes along.

The Friday Mosque of Bazaar-Korgon

The bust adorning Ulugbek Kadirov’s grave was made by his friends, and vandalized by community members who felt that it was sinful to depict humans in art.

The keeping of life-cycle rituals like the *Beshik Toi* (cradle ceremony), are criticized by the newly pious, but understood as inherently Islamic by practitioners.

The veil of a sixty-year-old woman

The veil of a new bride (*kelen*)

Women who “wear their scarves like this”

Women who do not “wear their scarves like this”

Part of the range of acceptable veiling – unmarried women in their early twenties

Women of the same age cohort, the secretary to the town mayor (R) does not veil, while the administrator of a local day care center, visiting the mayor, (L) does.

A “typical” evening wedding party

A wedding ceremony at the r*aion ZAGS* offices

A bride's *sep* which include dresses unfit for a newly pious woman

The construction of the 28th mosque. The banner notes that WAMY and an anonymous donor have sponsored the project.

The construction of the 28th mosque, with a set of never-completed apartment buildings from the Soviet era in the background

The foundation for the minaret at the *Raion* Friday Mosque was laid, but never complete. Funds are being sought for the project.

Toktosun also hopes to find funding for the construction of a building at this site adjacent to the mosque. It would be a place of prayer for women.

The fence in front of the mosque was built in 2004 just before the visit of then President Akaev to the town. He never showed up and the fence is the only renovation the mosque has seen since Tajideen resigned.