Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia

Maria Elisabeth Louw

Central Asian Studies Series

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The study of Islam in Central Asia has witnessed a flourishing of interest in recent years, but the majority of these studies have focused on the phenomenon of radical Islamic movements. Hitherto, very little attention has been paid to how Islam is lived on the ground among ordinary, moderate Muslim believers. Based on extensive anthropological fieldwork, this book examines how Islam is understood and practised among the Muslims of Central Asia in the post-Soviet era, focusing in particular on Uzbekistan. It shows how individuals negotiate understandings of Islam as an important marker for identity, grounding for morality and as a tool for everyday problem solving in the economically harsh, socially insecure and politically tense atmosphere of present-day Uzbekistan. It provides a detailed case study of the city of Bukhara that focuses upon the local forms of Sufism and veneration of saints, showing how Islam facilitates the pursuit of more modest goals of agency and belonging, as opposed to the utopian illusions of fundamentalist Muslim doctrines. Overall, this book provides a wealth of empirical research on the everyday practice of Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia.

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Preface

Dil ba yoru. Dast ba kor! (The heart with God. The hand at work!) A big billboard appeared by the roadside. I asked the taxi driver to stop the car so that I could take a picture of it. My field assistant giggled: if I were to take pictures of each and every billboard we encountered along the roadside, we would never get anywhere. The taxi driver reproached him: what was written on the billboard, he said, was true, and if the guest from Denmark wanted to know how people in Uzbekistan felt about Islam, she had better fix the words in her mind: 'The heart with God. The hand at work.' He put his right hand to his chest. Uzbeks, he continued, might not know a lot about Islam – the 70 Soviet years had made them forget a lot – but they had kept God in their hearts. Not like those bloody Wahhabis or Taliban, who called themselves Muslims, and who knew a lot about Islam (he pointed at his head), but whose hearts were covered in darkness.

'The heart with God, the hand at work.' This saying, or 'motto', is attributed to Bahouddin Naqshband, patron saint of Bukhara and a central figure in the development of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi *tariqa* (way or order). During my fieldwork in Bukhara I encountered this saying time and time again: not only seeing it spelled out on roadside billboards meant to inspire the wayfarers, but also in listening to people's attempts to convey a sense of what it meant to be Muslim in post-Soviet society.

They used this proverb as shorthand for their conviction that although they had lost much formal knowledge of Islam during the 70 Soviet years, and although they might have denied the existence of God at times and have declared themselves atheists in order to accommodate to Soviet society, they remained Muslims in essence. They used it to define their own deeply-felt Muslim identity as opposed to that of Muslim 'extremists' or 'Wahhabis', whose apparently profound knowledge of Islam, they pointed out, was only a superficial cover for evil. They also used it like the elderly owner of a gas and service station, who had put a shop sign with the wording *Dast ba koru. Dil ba yor* on the roof of the station. With his eyes fixed on the engine of a car he was repairing, he explained that he had given his business this name because he believed that the most important way of praising God was to work to make a living for one's family and to serve one's country. Everybody in today's society had to work hard to make his or her own living – not as in Soviet times, when it had

been possible to manage without working. Because he worked very hard, God had blessed him with success in his business. Like him, Bukhara Muslims frequently used the saying to indicate that although they might seem wholly occupied with worldly affairs, and although they did not make a show of their Muslim identity, they connected everything they did with God, and their work was therefore blessed by God. However, they also used it as an ideal against which they measured the behaviour of their fellow countrymen, arguing that the Soviet years, if not the distractions of post-Soviet society, had covered their hearts in darkness. People had thus forgotten God and instead turned their attention towards money, commodities and power, compromising every moral standard in their endeavours to seek out the new opportunities that independence, in particular market economic reforms, had brought about. And the saying was also an ideal against which they measured their own current predicaments: their own inability to live up to the ideal of making a living through hard, honest labour and entrepreneurship, so highly valued, but also so hard to live up to in a post-Soviet society haunted by increasing unemployment rates and omnipresent corruption.

'The heart with God. The hand at work.' The saying captured much of what was at stake for many people in post-Soviet Uzbek society, and what they articulated in their engagement with Islam: efforts to recapture agency at a time where rapid social change had made the ground shake beneath the feet of many people, disrupting the habitual, blocking their usual ways of acting and bringing forth a new repertoire of possibilities. And efforts to recapture a moral grounding of agency, a reconnection of their agency with a larger sphere of being, at a time where many felt alienated from social communities and moral orders they used to identify with. In short, it captured their efforts to recreate a satisfying existence in a changing social world.

In this book, I explore the various ways of recapturing and reimagining agency and social being within a larger moral community that are articulated in everyday Islam in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, the predicaments of post-Soviet society that they reflect and the new understandings of Islam and of the meanings of being Muslim which are created in this process.

Over the years, many people have been involved in this project, offering invaluable contributions to its realization. Here, I wish to express my gratitude to Bodil Selmer, Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology and Ethnography, University of Aarhus, who supervised the PhD thesis on which this book is based. Bodil has been very encouraging all the way, supporting my ideas while asking the right critical questions and making useful suggestions. She was also the first to suggest that I should make a book out of my thesis. I am also very grateful to Dr John Schoeberlein, Director of the Centre for Central Asian Studies at Harvard University, who provided me with the opportunity to visit the Centre for three months during the spring term of 2001, thereby giving me the chance to discuss my project with other students and scholars working in Central Asia. I also owe my thanks to Professor Michael Jackson and Associate Professor Inger Sjørslev, who during their PhD course 'Writing Anthropology'

held at the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen in October 2001 provided me with inspiration and encouraging comments at a time when I much needed it. Also the PhD course 'Grass Roots Ethnography, The Imaginary, The Illusio, and Social Poetics', held by Professor Michael Jackson and Associate Professor Ghassan Hage at the same place in October 2002 stimulated my work in a very constructive manner. Thanks a lot – also to the other PhD students who participated in the courses and contributed with their comments. I also wish to express my deep gratitude to Dr Lotte Isager, Dr Ann Maria Ostenfeld-Rosenthal and Dr Johan Rasanayagam, who have all contributed with helpful and encouraging comments to my manuscript at various stages in the writing process as well as to the members of the committee which assessed my PhD thesis: Dr Martijn van Beek, Dr Michael Herzfeld and Dr Galina Lindquist whose very constructive comments and critiques were a great help to the process of transforming the thesis into a book manuscript. Furthermore, I am grateful to my colleagues at the Department of Anthropology and Ethnography, Aarhus University, who stimulated my work in more indirect ways.

Thanks are also due to my family; to my mother Inger Louw, my sisters Signe and Louise and my brother Martin – along with Jørgen, Bjarne, Anne-Mette, Marie, Anna, Malene, Jens Peder and Sofia – and to my friends (in particular to the 'Soviet') for bearing with me and my frequent absences, and for helping me putting things in perspective. Thanks to Alain for his continuous love, tolerance and support.

First and foremost, however, I own a profound debt of gratitude to all the people in Uzbekistan who made my project possible in the first place, and whose kindness, openness and hospitality towards a stranger under the difficult circumstances that characterized their lives made a great impression on me. Circumstances, unfortunately, do not allow me to mention any names. I do, however, wish to express a special thanks to my very patient language teacher, to my invaluable field assistants, and to my host families, who shared their life with me, and to those who became friends, and without whom life in the field would have been tough. *Kattadan-katta rahmat.*

Notes on transliteration

In this book, I have chosen to present commonly known religious terms which stem from Arabic, as they are conventionally transliterated from Arabic. That is, rather than writing, for example, *Islom*, *halol* and *Qur'on*, as in Uzbek, I shall write *Islam*, *halal* and *Qur'an*. Less commonly known terms are presented in their Uzbek version. That is, rather than writing, for example, *ziyarat* and *dua*, I shall write *ziyorat* and *duo*.

I have also chosen to keep such local peculiarities as the term *avliyo*. *Avliya*, in Arabic, is plural of *wali.* The term *wali*, however, was only rarely used during my fieldwork in Uzbekistan. The plural form, in Uzbek: *avliyo*, is commonly used as a singular form. In order to preserve local colouring I shall also present names of local saints and scholars, which are well known in the larger Islamic world too, in their present-day Uzbek versions. This means, for example, that I will refer to Bahâ' al-Dîn Naqshband as Bahouddin Naqshband.

The Uzbek language, during the twentieth century, has undergone several changes in alphabet: from the Arabic to the Cyrillic (in 1940) and, after independence, to Latin (cf. Roy 2000: 76). When transliterating from Cyrillic I have followed the 1995 official Uzbek Roman alphabet.[1]

1 Introduction

Forgotten Muslims

The dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991 was not only the dissolution of a state. It was also an event in the prelude to, and in the wake of which, many images informing our understanding of the world were deconstructed. The usual geographic representation of the Soviet Union on world political maps as a single huge pink country to a large extent reflected the Western common sense understanding of Soviet society as a huge homogeneous whole, conformity to which was forcibly ensured by an omnipotent Communist Party (Saroyan 1997: 125). The image of the Soviet Union as a homogeneous whole was supported by the habitual practice in the West – a habitual practice with roots back to the days of the Tsarist Russian empire – of using the name 'Russia' as a synonym for this whole, and calling its inhabitants 'Russians', although around half of the population of the Soviet Union consisted of non-Russians.

As the Soviet Union was dissolved, voices appeared out of this 'Russian' whole demanding recognition for peoples and nations with strange names, belonging to places unfamiliar to most people on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Though some of these places – Samarkand, Merv, Tashkent, Khiva and Bukhara for example – had certainly played a role in the imaginary horizons of many people, they had seldom been associated with the Soviet Union. A significant number of these voices belonged to people who considered themselves Muslims: Azeris, Bashkirs, Chechens, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Tatars, Turkmen and Uzbeks, just to name some of the largest populations.[1]

Up until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Muslims of the Soviet Union – around 50 million people, most of them living in Central Asia – had only been of interest to a small group of dedicated scholars in the West. To a great extent politics determines how the world is carved up for scholarship. The political marginality of the Muslims of Soviet Central Asia, and their marginality to the modern Islamic world, was thus reflected in their marginal treatment within the academic communities of both Soviet studies and Islamic studies (Khalid 1998: xiv; Voll 1994: 63–4; Schoeberlein 2002: 4–5). Moreover, Western scholars interested in the Muslims of the Soviet Union were working against all odds, in

the sense that they were denied opportunities to do first-hand research and had to rely mainly on secondary sources – that is, work done by their Soviet colleagues. *Les musulmans oubliés*, these Muslims were termed by two of the most prominent scholars, Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, in their book by the same name (1981).

Central Asia's forgotten Muslims were not only forgotten by the outside world. Amnesia also characterized their very own lifeworlds. In any case, that is what people in Bukhara frequently pointed out to me during my fieldwork there, and what the official discourses of the post-Soviet Uzbek government pointed out too. Lost knowledge, or oblivion, usually caused by the '70 Soviet years', was discursively omnipresent and played an important role in people's reflections on Islam – or more precisely the *musulmonchilik* ('Muslimness') of society. The official discourses of the political elites blamed the '70 Soviet years' for the fact that some Uzbeks had been led astray by foreign extremist Islamic movements in the wake of the country's independence, forgetting their essential Uzbek 'Muslimness', which did not confuse religion and politics. By the same token, Bukhara Muslims made oblivion accountable for a variety of ills in their everyday discourses, such as their own deficiency in formal knowledge about Islam, their inability to make a proper living in post-Soviet society or the general moral degradation of this post-Soviet society. Indeed, tropes of time permeated official as well as everyday discourses on Islam: people talked about 'extremists' or 'Wahhabis' as anachronisms trying to turn back the clock hundreds of years. And when talking about their faith, they talked about a homegrown, primordial Islamic tradition or 'Muslimness', a collective memory which might be partly forgotten but which nevertheless was embodied in the innermost corners of their very being as well as in sacred places in the outside landscape – chronotropes[2] fusing space and time – and which thus only had to be restored.

Time is a principle for ordering reality and as such also for the conceptualization of relations between selves and others, identity and alterity. By attaching predicates such as 'primordial', 'ancient', 'anachronistic', 'modern' or 'forgotten' to phenomena, thereby calling for their commemoration, or by dismissing them in calling them 'remnants', people present evaluations of these phenomena. They also try to make other people focus their attention on and engage in certain parts of reality and disengage from other parts of reality. In this book I explore how people in post-Soviet Bukhara, in engaging with the chronotropes of sacred space, continually negotiate the contours and contents of proper 'Muslimness' in their everyday struggles for creating a fulfilling existence in a changing social world. In more abstract terms, I explore social memory as a process of continuous negotiation informed by present concerns.

Situating the project

In spite of the predictions of modernist narratives, the modern world still seems to resist disenchantment. Religion remains crucial in the life of 'modern' communities all around the world and indeed forces us to revise our very con-

ceptions of 'modernity' (cf. Comaroff 1994; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). The stubborn enchantedness of the world is perhaps most telling in the parts of the world where the concrete efforts to disenchant it were extraordinarily organized and profound – such as the former Soviet Union. Here restrictions against religious practices had been a central aspect of government policies since the revolution, policies which were aimed at realizing the vision of a new, thoroughly rational *Homo Sovieticus*.[3] It was this stubborn enchantedness of the new Soviet men and women which induced me to do fieldwork in the former Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan in the first place. I was fascinated by reports from former Soviet Uzbekistan that described revivals in public space of practices of Sufism and veneration of popular saints: ways of practising Islam which Soviet discourses had typically identified as Islam's most irrational and world-denying expressions. And I wanted to explore this revival by means of a classical anthropological fieldwork which had again become possible to undertake in this part of the world. The basic question that I have pursued in the course of my work, then, is the question of what these practices of Sufism and veneration of saints veneration mean to people in Uzbekistan; what is at stake in these practices for the people engaging in them.

The issue of the puzzling tenacity of Islam in Central Asia and the failure to realize the vision of the thoroughly rational *Homo Sovieticus* was also subject to much speculation in studies carried out during the Soviet years. Soviet ethnographic[4] studies of Islam in Central Asia approached it from the perspective of Marxist historical materialism, defining it as an irrational form of social consciousness, a twisted reflection of people's material life, a fetish inhibiting people from acting on the real material world. The evolutionary path from feudalism to socialism, it was held, would eliminate religion as a form of social consciousness and give way to a thoroughly rationalist, secular outlook. Following Lenin's voluntarist position that communism can be taught to the people, Soviet authors also in varying degrees pointed out that changes in the superstructure such as education and propaganda could promote, and indeed had promoted, secularization (Saroyan 1997: 22). However, the problem for Soviet scholars schooled in this evolutionist tradition was the fact that empirical research revealed that religious beliefs and practices continued to exist in spite of the fact that they should have been in decline according to the evolutionary scheme. Islam continued to inform the lives of Soviet Muslim citizens: most of them – even Communist Party officials, who were professed atheists in their public life – continued to observe important Islamic holidays and rites of passage with the assistance of unregistered clerics, even if they would often call these rituals 'national' rather than Islamic and observe them in the privacy of their own homes. Male circumcision and its celebration remained almost universal in Central Asia throughout the Soviet period, and religious rituals related to marriage, birth and death were very common. The fast in the month of Ramadan also seems to have been widely observed. Marriages between Muslim men and non-Muslim women, which were sanctioned by tradition, were not uncommon, while the marriage of Muslim women to non-Muslim men, which is proscribed

by the *shari'a* (Islamic law), was extremely rare. Unregistered mosques and *madrasa*s (Islamic educational institutions) functioned clandestinely, and people visited the shrines of *avliyo* (Muslim 'saints').[5]

Most Soviet scholars tried to explain the perseverance of Islam with reference to the thesis that social consciousness is more conservative than social being. Although the evolution of religion is determined by changes in social life, there is not necessarily complete harmony between different stages of the development of society and religion, and remnants or survivals of earlier forms of consciousness can be found in more developed societies, including the Soviet Union (see for example Basilov 1980: 233).[6] This thesis did in fact inform Soviet studies of Islam in the Soviet Union; most notably, it found expression in the dichotomy between 'official' and 'parallel' Islam which became prevalent in Soviet studies of Islam in the Soviet Union from the late 1960s onward. This distinction defined 'parallel' Islam negatively, as Islamic institutions and clergy existing and operating outside the sanctioned sphere of the government-controlled official Soviet Muslim establishment, the Muslim Spiritual Directorates which had been established during the Second World War (see Chapter 2). The number of unregistered religious authorities and institutions was unknown, but undoubtedly considerable.[7]

Soviet observers often identified these 'parallel' religious authorities and institutions as connected with the Sufi orders. In the Soviet era, the label 'Sufi' was central to the 'rhetoric of islamophobia', conjuring up fears of underground conspiracies (Atkin 2000: 124). The Sufi orders were conceived of as not only 'parallel' to but also as hostile to the official Muslim hierarchy and to the Soviet state in general. They were presented as clandestine anti-Soviet organizations made up of Muslim fanatics. Their ritual practices, such as the *zikr* (remembrance or recollection of God) were interpreted as some of the most primitive and irrational practices in Islam. The more popular practices of veneration of saints at shrines, also believed to be controlled by Sufis, were interpreted as vestiges of pre-Islamic, shamanistic religious traditions (see for example Basilov 1980: 239–40, 87–9; Snesarev 1970–1). In short, Soviet studies of Central Asian Islam left no possibility for Islam to seriously speak to and enrich the lives of modern human beings in any significant way, and made no attempts to understand Islam from the perspective of Central Asian Muslim believers.

As for Western scholars interested in the Muslims of Central Asia, as already mentioned, they were working against all odds in the sense that they did not have the opportunity to do first-hand research and had to rely on work done by their Soviet colleagues. According to the political scientist Mark Saroyan, a profound intertextuality in Western scholarly writing on Soviet Islam was the result (Saroyan 1997). Although Western scholars expressed scepticism about the validity and reliability of Soviet scholarship and recognized its biased character, their own analyses tended to be profoundly informed by these Soviet studies. Soviet sources provided Western scholars with indirect empirical data, as for example when Western writers made the assumption that Soviet polemics directed at Muslims, their beliefs or their practices could be interpreted as

reflecting the actual state of affairs in Soviet Muslim society (Saroyan 1997: 12). According to Saroyan, Soviet sources also provided Western scholars with analytical concepts and theoretical frameworks, notably the distinction between 'parallel' and 'official' Islam which was to become central to Western literature on Soviet Islam from the late 1970s onward. Saroyan might be right to some extent about this dependence. However, he does not discuss the fact that the dichotomy is very similar to the dichotomy between 'folk' or 'low' and 'high' Islam, or between the 'great tradition' and 'little traditions' of Islam that characterized approaches to Islam in general in Western social science,[8] and of which Western scholars writing on Soviet Islam certainly must have been aware.

Whereas most Soviet analyses assumed that modernization already had taken place in the Soviet Union and that what was left of (traditional or parallel) Islam were only remnants from the previous era, Western scholars, with historian Alexandre Bennigsen as the leading figure, often assumed that the Muslim societies in the Soviet Union had not been modernized in a cultural or psychological sense, as they were protecting themselves and their tradition against Soviet attempts at modernization, which included the establishment of official state-run Islam. Whereas the official Muslim establishment was seen as a puppet of the regime, unable to satisfy the spiritual needs of the population, 'parallel' Islam was seen as an expression of a transhistorical tradition and in essence a site of resistance to the Soviet system; it was thus fundamentally anti-Soviet and antimodern. The Sufi orders were depicted as a well-organized underground opposition movement, and the Sufi shrines were represented as places where they promoted their ideas to the general population, contributing significantly to the conservation of religious feelings among them (see, for example, Bennigsen and Broxup 1983; Lemercier-Quelquejay 1984; Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985). Where Soviet studies predicted the eventual disappearance of Islam, Western studies predicted an eventual clash between the fundamentally incongruent cultures of parallel Islam and Soviet communism. According to the dominant Western expectations of the 1970s and 1980s, Soviet Islam was indeed a threat to the Soviet state: at that time, expectations of unrest among the Muslim populations of the Soviet Union were fuelled by journalistic reports and scholarly studies arguing that Islam posed the most serious threat to the integrity of the Soviet Union (cf. Myer 2002; Saroyan 1997: 8; Shahrani 1993: 123; Shahrani 1995).

However, Islam never became an important vehicle for opposition to the Soviet state, and the Muslims of Central Asia did not play any significant part in the collapse of the Soviet Union. With regard to the Sufis, more particularly, they were apparently far more interested in spiritual matters than in politics (Atkin 1995: 251).[9] In other words, although Islam remained very important to Central Asian peoples, they did not necessarily conceive of Islam as fundamentally opposed to the Soviet state and to Soviet ideology. It became increasingly clear that resistance on the part of Soviet Central Asian Muslims, as well as the posited incongruence between Islam and Soviet communism had lain in the eyes of the observers rather than in the hearts and minds of the actors involved. How

would approaches postulating such an incongruence, for example, account for the fact that in post-Soviet Uzbekistan it is not uncommon to meet elderly people visiting shrines of *avliyo* (Muslim saints), proudly displaying decorations received from the Soviet state? Or the fact that one occasionally hears Uzbek Muslims speak of Moscow as 'our capital' and the Lenin Mausoleum as 'our Lenin Mausoleum', even referring to Lenin and Stalin as *avliyo*?

Retrospectively, these studies appear to have been informed by some rather stereotypical categories which were substitutes for the ethnographic richness that was lacking due to the impossibility of doing first-hand research in the Soviet Union. These categories were rooted in a modernist theoretical framework similar to the one informing Soviet analyses, a framework which maintained a dichotomy between essentialized conceptions of 'tradition' or 'religion' on the one hand, and 'modernity' on the other, and which treated these concepts as mutually exclusive. Only the normative signs were inverted: the irrational and reactionary Muslim in Soviet discourse was paralleled in Western discourse by the noble Muslim fighting for his cultural integrity against Soviet modernizing forces. The modernist-evolutionist Soviet framework, in other words, was paralleled in Western discourse by a cultural relativist framework that depicted the Central Asian Muslim as an exoticized cultural other who both constituted and occupied a reality grounded in principles incommensurable with the reality constituted and occupied by the Soviets (cf. Saroyan 1997).

From the beginning, my project was informed by an effort to deconstruct the dichotomous, evolutionary, reified categories which have pervaded analyses of Islam in Soviet Central Asia, and which have continued to flourish since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since then, the formerly romanticized Western images of the Muslims of the Soviet Union have faded in the face of a perceived fundamentalist or radical Islamist threat to Euro-American hegemony, and 'Islam' has increasingly become a substitute for 'Communism' as the number one 'Other' of the West. Some political commentators seem inclined to interpret any Central Asian Muslim expression of dissatisfaction with the status quo with fanaticism, extremism, intolerance and violence (cf. Atkin 2000: 132; Myer 2002: 238–9). For example, many Western political commentators and analysts initially understood the Tajik civil war of 1992–4 as a struggle between militant Islam and secularism, although a much more complex range of interests was involved (Atkin 1995: 247–55). As I will show in Chapter 2, radical Islam has also played the role of the 'Other' for Uzbek President Islam Karimov and his ideology of national independence, contributing to the justification of an authoritarian regime characterized by gross human rights violations.

Much writing about the meanings of Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia has focused on Islamic fundamentalism, or radical Islam, and the question of whether there is a risk that militant or radical Islam may gain a foothold in the region.[10] This is, of course, an important discussion. I fully agree with the analysts who have pointed out that the post-Soviet Uzbek government's repression of the freedom of religion in the name of peace and stability and the War against Terror may be counterproductive.[11] But it is also important to point out – a fact

perhaps neglected a bit in the discussions of radical Islam in the region – that the majority of the Muslims of Central Asia do not see the diverse radical Islamist movements which have appeared in the region since independence to challenge the social and political order as serious alternatives to that order (cf. Akiner 2003: 115). That was also the general impression I gained from my fieldwork in Bukhara, a region where radical Islamic groups have not been particularly active. In Bukhara, most people centre their practice and understanding of Islam around those practices of veneration of saints which have often been identified as the most important aspect of popular Islam in Central Asia: in the eyes of many locals, these are far more important to engage in than, say, the five 'pillars' of Islam.[12] Bukhara is also a region where Sufism, Islam's mystical tradition – more particularly the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* (way or order) – plays an important role. After being repressed and severely reduced during the Soviet period, Naqshbandiyya has gradually re-emerged in Bukhara in the years after independence. Aspects of Naqshbandiyya's teaching have great popular appeal: I often experienced central aspects of Naqshbandiyya's teaching echoing in many peoples' – and not only Naqshbandis' – attempts to convey a sense of what it meant to be Muslim in post-Soviet society. Sufism and veneration of saints, furthermore, have been co-opted into the post-Soviet Uzbek government's nation-building project – and indeed in nation-building projects in all the former Soviet Central Asian republics.

Most people in Bukhara somehow try to accommodate to the state of affairs, giving peace the highest priority and dissociating themselves strongly from the militant movements, whose use of violence they perceive to be fundamentally incongruent with proper 'Muslimness'. They do this, even though they perceive post-independence society as a mixed blessing: although some of them are harassed for expressing their faith in ways that seem wrong in the eyes of authorities, and although they are increasingly disillusioned because of the unfulfilled promises of the post-Soviet government, which have left them struggling in their daily lives with economic despair and corruption. During my fieldwork I found that Islam is central in people's efforts to address the predicaments of post-Soviet society – making sense of, assessing and finding a foothold in a changing and challenging world. Most people, however, embrace an accommodating version of Islam. Occasionally I met people who rejected 'modern' life altogether, the whole social and political order of post-Soviet society, and who hoped that society would, sooner or later, 'return' to a state where the *shari'a* governed every part of life. Most, however, tend to believe that a recovery of a proper local 'Muslimness' will also mean a recovery of an Islam compatible with and providing solutions for the challenges of 'modern' life. In people's efforts to navigate in a changing world, and to understand and practise proper 'Muslimness', new understandings of Islam and of what it means to be Muslim are brought into being which expose the inadequacies of the reified concepts of Islam which dominate the headlines of today. To demonstrate that 'Muslimness' is a morality in the making rather than a fixed answer to the predicaments of life is one of the major goals of this book. My focus is what one may term 'everyday

Islam': that is, Islam or 'Muslimness' as practised and understood by ordinary Muslims in the context of their everyday life rather than the *ulama* (Muslim scholars).[13]

Methodology and ethical research dilemmas

The fieldwork upon which this book is based was conducted over 13 months, from June 1998 through to February 1999 and from June through to September 2000. Apart from working in Bukhara and its surroundings I made minor field trips to Tashkent, Samarkand and Shahrizabs. During my fieldwork I participated in various religious rituals and ceremonies as well as in the everyday life of my host families. While this engagement in the social reality under study and informal speech-in-action (cf. Sanjek 1990: 105–6) were very important methodological tools for me, I also conducted 60 semi-structured interviews[14] along with numerous short interviews with religious authorities and visitors at shrines. These interviews enabled me to create contexts for people to reflect on their lifeworlds from a distance, in a non-habitual way, but still in their own terms and at their own pace.[15]

As a consequence of the reflexive character of anthropological fieldwork – the fact that one is inevitably implicated in the social reality of the people studied – ethical considerations, dilemmas and choices are part of every step of the research process as well as the process of writing up. When doing research on as politically sensitive a topic as Islam in Uzbekistan, one faces certain challenges which are also ethical in nature. The post-Soviet Uzbek government's policy towards Islam has been ambiguous. On the one hand it has made use of Islam as a means of nation building. In books, speeches and interviews, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov has persistently pointed out that religious piety is fundamental to the Uzbek national character. On the other hand, the government has cracked down on Islam in the name of the War on Terrorism, identifying Islamic 'extremism' or 'Wahhabism' as the greatest threat to the security of the nation. In this process a paranoid climate has been created where virtually any kind of expression of devotion to Islam might be interpreted as a sign of extremist, anti-state sentiments. Therefore people are very cautious about how they practise and speak about their religion, and with whom they speak about it, and as an anthropologist interested in people's perceptions of Islam one needs to take great care not to jeopardize people's sense of security. Furthermore, one is often forced to infer meaning from ambiguous remarks and telling silences, always running the risk of over-interpretation in the process.

Ethical considerations have also been an integrated part of writing this book. The question of whether it can possibly harm any of the people who contributed to this work has been at the back of my mind during the whole process of analysis and writing up. Because of its history as a centre of Islamic learning and mysticism, Bukhara is a unique place which also plays a special role in the imagination of many Uzbeks. Therefore I quickly dismissed the idea of giving a fictional name to the place of my research. However, I have provided all people

with fictional names, both because of the issue of political sensitivity and because of the private character of some of the subjects that I discussed with them. I have done this while trying to balance anonymization with the attempt – also of great importance to me – to move beyond timeless generalizations and stereotypes by presenting these persons, not as average or anonymous bearers of a 'culture', but as situated subjects with specific histories whose engagement in Islam is moved by specific concerns; to allow individuals to emerge in all their particularity. My aim has been to write 'ethnographies of the particular', as Lila Abu-Lughod (Abu-Lughod 1991: 141) has termed it, in order to constitute others as less other and more similar. People are not necessarily similar in the sense that they have similar world views, but in the sense that they live their lives as we perceive ourselves living, 'not as robots programmed with "cultural" rules, but as people going through life agonizing over decisions, making mistakes, trying to make themselves look good, enduring tragedies and personal losses, enjoying others, and finding moments of happiness' (ibid.: 158). I have chosen to focus in particular on a couple of handfuls of people with whom I established enduring relations during my fieldwork, and whom I was therefore able follow relatively closely. I have, however, also sought to situate their specific life trajectories within parameters that are common to post-Soviet Uzbek society, and to use their more personal trajectories as prisms in which a range of the predicaments and contradictions that people there generally struggle with are reflected.

Theoretical approach

In order to highlight the lived complexity and continually negotiated character of everyday Islam, and to understand the social dynamics of its negotiation, I have relied on insights from phenomenology as well as practice theory. I use the phenomenological concept of 'lifeworld' to denote the domain of everyday, immediate social existence and practical activity in which meaning is grounded (cf. Jackson 1996: 8). As will become clear, the phenomenologically inspired anthropology of Michael Jackson has been an important source of inspiration for me, with its insistence that one should focus on how specific actors interpret and use practices, ideas and beliefs to express various experiences, generate various meanings and accomplish various results in specific situations, rather than focusing on what they intrinsically or objectively 'mean', or on uncovering their hidden causes or determinants. Like people everywhere, Bukhara's Muslims are thrown into a world which has been made by others at other times and will outlast them; but they are not merely the passive bearers of this world. They are active agents in its reproduction and transformation, striving to make it a world they can call their own (cf. Jackson 1989: 14; Jackson 1995: 123). This does not mean that the social and semantic worlds of Bukhara's Muslims should be explained solely by reference to individual agency. There are structural forces that influence the subjective life of the individual, setting limits to human creativity and choice. For this reason, I intend to show how the subjective concerns

people articulate in their engagement with Islam are linked to predicaments and contradictions general to post-Soviet Uzbek society. Still, it makes sense to focus on subjective agency and experience. People never just perpetuate pre-existing circumstances; they interpret them, contest, negotiate and nuance them, re-imagine them, protest against them and accommodate to them, as they strive to create a satisfying existence. These processes are the focus of this book. I shall argue that the sacred sites which Bukhara Muslims seek out – shrines visible in the physical landscape, sacred space temporarily created through rituals, dream-sites where they encounter saints of past times, or sites in their own innermost being – are focal points for reflection on, negotiation of and practical experimentation with the question of which parts of reality are worth engaging in. They are focal points for people's attempts to recapture or work out some kind of balance between agency and autonomy on the one hand, and social being within a larger moral order on the other hand. People seek out sacred sites as part of their struggle to create a fulfilling existence in a changing social world which they often feel is beyond their control and understanding.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of state socialism throughout Central and Eastern Europe, the former socialist countries have undergone rapid and profound political, economic and socio-cultural changes. This is also the case in former Soviet Central Asia, where people have felt the effects of large-scale political, economic and socio-cultural processes acutely; where, for example, they have increasingly had to pay for goods and services that used to be provided free of charge; where their salaries have been devalued drastically; where the Russian language they formerly had to learn in order to make their way in society is now denigrated as foreign and colonial; where honours and insignia that used to mark them as distinct in the positive way are now often regarded as merely remnants from a dubious past; and where a whole new range of opportunities for advancing in society has arisen, opportunities which they, however, may not know how to pursue. The people I worked among lived under an authoritarian government that made extensive use of a Soviet-style ideological apparatus in an effort to influence their thoughts and actions, telling them that the difficulties they were living through were only passing moments on their nation's path to prosperity and grandeur. At the same time, opposition movements, including the militant Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the radical (though apparently non-violent) Hizb ut-Tahrir, also made appeals to their hearts and minds in the form of visions of a future where the *shari'a* would govern all spheres of social life and create fulfilment for people. Economic reforms had created a seemingly unlimited array of opportunities for making a living, particularly in the sphere of business, but also a situation where pensioners could barely afford bread. New ideals and models for identification were introduced with the opening up of the country to the Western world. At the same time, the government and other public figures put traditional family and community values forward as central tenets of society.

In their efforts to navigate within all this, these people neither blindly and unreflectively embraced post-Soviet nationalist discourses, Islamic radicalism

nor Western values, nor merely continued doing and thinking what they had used to do and think during Soviet times. But it was equally the case that they were not driven by one-dimensional self-interests that made them engage cynically in whatever parts of reality served their interests at particular moments. Most of them found people who seemed to be controlled by blind belief – notably the mouthpieces of the regime or the radical Islamists – and people who opportunistically embraced everything that could momentarily serve their interests – notably the gangster-capitalists of the post-Soviet market – equally repulsive, although they did occasionally have fantasies about absolute agency and absolute immersion in a transcendent moral order as they struggled along, feeling estrangement and loss of agency. Blind belief and cynical pragmatism were extreme ways of being in the world which they rarely resorted to, as they engaged in and with various parts of reality with various degrees of intensity and passion, balancing various concerns in their efforts to create a fulfilling social existence. Or, as they themselves would express it, as they were engaged in restoring the essential, though partly forgotten, 'Muslimness' of society.

Recreating illusions

I have found Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'illusio' (Bourdieu 1990 and 2000)[16] illuminating in my efforts to capture how people are implicated with various parts of reality in various degrees in their engagement with the world. Illusio, in Bourdieu's terminology, is

> what gives 'sense' (both meaning and direction) to existence by leading one to invest in a game and its forthcoming [*son à venir*], in the *lusiones*, the chances, that it offers to those who are caught up in the game and who expect something from it.
>
> (Bourdieu 2000: 207)

Illusio refers to the state of being invested in the game (see below), of taking the game seriously, being caught up in and by it, believing that playing it is worth the effort (Bourdieu 1998: 76–7). The concept of illusio does not indicate some distortion of a truth which is characteristic of a certain type of beliefs and opposed to rationality. Quite the contrary, illusio is an essential condition for and part of all human agency. Without illusio acts would be meaningless; illusions give acts meanings that reach out beyond the acts themselves. 'To care about a reality,' writes Ghassan Hage in a reading of Bourdieu which relates the concept of illusio to his own concept of 'intensity' (Hage 2002), 'is to share in the illusio that it is worth being part of it or being implicated in it, and the more one becomes implicated in a reality the more one feels it intensely' (ibid.: 201). Sharing the illusio of some reality, being implicated in it, one experiences this reality with particular intensity. It leaves a particularly deep impression; it is particularly involving and affecting. And one's engagement in the reality, in turn, contributes to construct its intensity (ibid.: 193–4).

Bourdieu more specifically relates the concept of illusio to his concept of the social 'field', or social 'game', as he sometimes terms it. According to his theoretical model, any social formation is structured in terms of a hierarchically organized series of fields or games. The more complex and differentiated the society, the more social fields there will be. A field is a relatively autonomous social arena which evaluates what is done in it, the stakes at play, according to principles and criteria that are irreducible to those of other universes. Within the fields, agents – from unequal positions – engage in competition for control of specific resources or stakes and access to them; for improvement or preservation of their positions within the field, and – depending on the position they occupy there – for change or preservation of its boundaries and shape. Social fields are defined by what is at stake in them. The stakes can be divided into four main categories of capital: economic capital, social capital (that is, valued relations with significant others), cultural capital (that is, legitimate knowledge, competences or dispositions) and symbolic capital (that is, prestige, celebrity, honour, consecration). The field of power represents a kind of meta-field in Bourdieu's model; this field comprises the set of dominant power relations in society, which is the source of the power relations that structure all other fields and their relations; in other terms, the field of power sets the exchange rates between different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1998: 33–4).

A field exists only so far as players enter it, players who recognize and pursue the stakes it offers. To enter a field one must possess the 'habitus', the socially constituted dispositions,[17] which dispose one to enter it and thus to share in the illusio that it is worth being implicated in it. It is because agents' minds are structured according to the structure of the games in which they play – because of an ontological complicity between mental structures and the objective structures of social space – that they are caught up in and by these games, forget them *qua* games and hold an enchanted relation to them (Bourdieu 1990: 66; Bourdieu 1998: 77–8).

Social games are not fair games: actors engage in them from unequal positions, with unequal powers, endowed with unequal amounts of capital to invest. Actors' expectations, hopes and aspirations, furthermore, are usually distributed according to the amounts of capital they possess and thus to the objective chances they have in the social games (Bourdieu 1990: 65; Bourdieu 2000: 214–16). Normally, in people's daily engagement with the world there is correspondence between illusio and lusiones, between the anticipations and expectations which are constitutive of an illusio as investment in a social field, and the course of the world which is there to fulfil them. Actors are immersed in the forthcoming of the field. They anticipate and adjust to the forthcoming of the field as it is inscribed in the immediate configuration of things – and thus help bring this forthcoming, or future, about. They do so ' "on the spot", "in the twinkling of an eye", "in the heat of the moment", that is, in conditions which exclude distance, perspective, detachment and reflexion' (Bourdieu 1990: 82). This practical sense of the forthcoming, the feel for the game – the capacity to place oneself not where the ball is, but where it is about to land – is acquired in

and through practice and familiarization with the field. Situations in which the coincidence between illusio and lusiones is broken, in which the environment is too different from the one to which agents are adjusted and their sense of the game thus fails, leads to their more conscious efforts to adapt themselves and/or make the world suit their habitus (Bourdieu 1990: 62–6, 81–2; Bourdieu 2000).

According to Bourdieu early socialization is particularly significant in deciding which parts of reality agents consider worth being implicated in, which illusions they share:

> one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is.
>
> (Bourdieu 1990: 67)

Belief, he writes, is an inherent part of belonging to a field and in its most accomplished form diametrically opposed to 'pragmatic faith', that is, the arbitrary acceptance, for the purposes of action, of an uncertain proposition (ibid.). 'One cannot really *live* the belief associated with profoundly different conditions of existence, with other games and stakes [. . .] Those who want to believe with the beliefs of others grasp neither the objective truth nor the subjective experience of belief' (ibid.: 68).

While I fully agree with Bourdieu that early socialization may be very important in determining which realities people find it worth while being implicated in, I do not think that anyone ever unambiguously 'really *lives*' any belief, misrecognizing its socially constructed nature and participating in it with undisputed, pre-reflexive compliance. Or rather, I believe that Bourdieu – maybe because of a tendency derived from structuralist tradition to locate generative forces outside the immediate, lived reality of the lifeworld[18] – makes an unnecessarily sharp distinction between the modes of relating to the world that human beings are continually moving between, distinguishing too sharply between 'belief' on the one hand and conscious reflection, doubt and 'pragmatic faith' on the other hand. Human beings, of course, do not constantly question the ground beneath their feet: that would indeed make them unable to move. The reason I find Bourdieu's concept of illusio so revealing here is that it captures the directedness of human agency better than, for example, the concept of interest with its utilitarianist connotations. Agency is not primarily informed by the actor's conscious and rational estimations of the value of engaging in a certain part of social reality, but rather unfolds as a kind of 'implicatedness' between subjective intentionality and social reality, at times to the point where distinctions between self and the world virtually disappear. But I would argue that it is equally the case that life is rarely characterized by any simple coherence between subjective anticipations and the course of the world. This becomes particularly obvious in a complex society like Bukhara, where the years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union have been characterized by massive social change that has brought

about new opportunities while blocking others. The people I came to know there rarely seemed to possess the social competence that would make them able to anticipate the course of the world, the moves of their fellow human beings, in a simple, pre-reflexive manner. Far from participating in social fields with undisputed compliance, they were constantly moving between – to various extents, and usually ambiguously – participating in various games and sharing their illusio; explicitly, allegorically or jokingly questioning the illusio of these games; desperately trying to re-establish a foothold in social games whose forthcoming they had misjudged; and dissimulating – that is, participating in social games as if they shared their illusio, while keeping their socially constructed being some kind of 'public secret'. Such dissimulation, it should be noted, is not necessarily grounded in opportunist, tactical, performative 'bad faith'. While it can be so, it can just as well be a kind of 'testing' of beliefs and their resonance in a lifeworld. I find it useful to think of these various degrees of implicatedness as a continuum, with a radical distinction between self and the world at the one extreme, and the dissolution of this distinction at the other extreme. Stanley Tambiah (Tambiah 1990) has conceptualized these extreme modes of relating to the world with the terms 'participation' and 'causality'. The terms are used by Tambiah to denote two analytically distinct, though coexistent and complementary modes of thought and action which human beings universally engage in to various degrees and in different contexts. 'Participation', according to Tambiah,

> can be represented as occurring when persons, groups, animals, places, and natural phenomena are in a relation of contiguity, and translate that relation into one of existential immediacy and contact and shared affinities. (In the language of semiotics, humans on the one hand, and places, objects and natural phenomena on the other, are represented as mutually representing one another 'iconically,' and also as transferring energies and attributes 'indexically').
>
> (ibid.: 107)

In this mode of relating to the world there is no (sharp) distinction between self and the world. 'Causality', on the other hand, 'is quintessentially represented by the categories, rules and methodology of positive science and discursive mathematico-logical reason. The scientific focus involves a particular kind of distancing, affective neutrality and abstraction to events in the world' (ibid.: 105). In this mode of relating to the world, the self is perceived *as* a self set apart from the world and acting in objectified space and time. The distinction, for Tambiah, is strictly analytical, and this is also how I use it here: most of the time human beings neither experience complete oneness with the world nor complete distance from it, but live aspects of the two modes at the same time in relation to different parts of reality, and in ambiguous relation to the same parts of reality.

Agency and belonging

In order for people to commit themselves to a particular reality, to share its illusio, they have to experience a sense of agency in relation to this particular reality. They also have to experience a sense of belonging to it; a sense that it transcends them and has been active in shaping what they are. In other words, they have to feel a balance between active and passive modes of being.

For this argument, I take my point of departure in the point made by Michael Jackson (Jackson 2002) that human beings need to imagine that their lives belong to a sphere of greater Being within which their actions and words matter and make a difference (ibid.: 14).[19] A satisfying social existence involves a sense of agency. A sense of agency, according to Jackson, is actually an existential imperative. But absolute agency, domination or possession of the world, would not be satisfying to most people: this would amount to existential emptiness, a lack of meaning in existence. A satisfying social existence implies mutuality, and belonging or being-at-home-in-the-world is a matter of working out some kind of balance between active and passive, autonomous and anonymous, modes of being (Jackson 1995: 123; Jackson 2002: 13). This desire to belong, to be influenced by a larger sphere of Being, is if not absent from, then at least downplayed in Bourdieu's writings, as it is in much practice theory. As Sherry Ortner once remarked about the concept of practice in practice theory, 'practice has qualities related to the hard times of today: pragmatism, maximization of advantage, "every man", as the saying goes, "for himself".' (Ortner 1984: 160). That this is so in Bourdieu's writings might somewhat paradoxically have to do with the fact that belonging is not in question in his model; agents are usually born into the social fields whose capital they pursue, and this is why the fields disappear from the awareness of the agents. Because of the relationship of ontological complicity between the habitus and the field, they do not question the illusio of the field; they do not question the fact that the field has been active in shaping what they are. But – again – among the people I worked among in Uzbekistan, a sense of belonging or plenitude was something people actively and consciously strove to create, desiring it ever more the more they found themselves alienated from social worlds they had formerly invested in, and which they felt had been active in shaping their very being.

In this book I will be employing Bourdieu's analytical concept of illusio and Jackson's insight that being-at-home-in-the-world is a matter of working out some kind of balance between active and passive, autonomous and anonymous, modes of being.

Imagining time

The points which I have sketched out here, and which I develop further over the course of this book, may capture something very general about what is at stake in human practice, in contexts of existential insecurity at least. What is more specific to the context of post-Soviet Central Asia is rather the particular ways in

which people there seek to make sense of their situation and to recreate the lost balance. One very important way is their dwelling at sacred places, places where the 'Muslimness' they are missing in the intersubjective encounters of their lifeworlds is somehow perceived to be gathered. These places are not only thresholds between the human world and the divine to them, but also between the present and a past where the gap between the ideal and the real was not as big as it seems to them in the present-day world. These sacred places are chronotropes which fuse space and time; they are manifestations of the divine which have somehow escaped the corrosion of time. Entering sacred space is virtual time travel taking visitors back to places 'elsewhere' in time, where life was characterized by proper 'Muslimness', or which points towards hoped-for futures where it will be so again. Entering sacred space, worshippers will seek the powers of the past to improve their present situation and knowledge of the past to put their present situation into perspective, making sense of it by placing it within larger spans of time, larger historical narratives.

Sometimes these narratives echo the 'transition' master narratives which have surrounded the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of state socialism throughout Central and Eastern Europe. These 'transition' master narratives are characterized by a somewhat simplified, neo-evolutionary, unilinear conception of history. The political establishment in post-Soviet Uzbekistan has made use of such teleological transition narratives, creating images of a society in a phase of 'transition', betwixt and between a colonial and totalitarian past and a near future characterized by national resurrection, freedom and democracy. In many scholarly studies as well as more popular literature, the changes taking place in the former socialist countries have also been subjected to a linear, teleological framework that assumes a particular trajectory of change, from socialism or dictatorship to liberal democracy, from plan to market economy (cf. Berdahl 2000; Hann *et al.* 2002). As Daphne Berdahl (Berdahl 2000) has noted, because of a predominant focus on large-scale economic processes, political elites, and evolutionary trajectories, much of the established 'transition' literature explains little about how people have actually experienced the political, economic and socio-cultural changes that have taken place since the collapse of socialist rule. Anthropological approaches to postsocialism thus complement and challenge macro-level analyses, focusing on how extra-local economic, political and social processes are embodied, negotiated, contested and potentially transformed at local level (ibid.: 3–5). The anthropological perspective makes us to rethink 'transition', which is precisely what I wish to do in this book.

In retrospect, I realize that during my fieldwork I initially had a tendency to proceed from an a priori assumption that the breaking up of the Soviet Union, a major transformation in terms of world history, would be an equally important fixed point around which the people I worked among would conceptualize their own histories. I therefore frequently asked them to compare how they practised Islam before and after independence. But I soon learned that proceeding from a fixed line drawn between the Soviet and the post-Soviet period actually inhibited an understanding of the complex and often ambiguous ways people made sense

of experience along historical lines. Take Hadicha for example, an elderly woman with whom I conducted an interview. She reflected for a short moment on my question about how she practised Islam at present compared to how she had practised it before independence; but then, with much more enthusiasm, she told me about an incident in 1985 that had completely changed how she was able to practise her religion: she had been far-sighted most of her life, but in 1985 she had got a pair of glasses and suddenly had been able to learn to read the Qur'an. A friend of hers, a female *mullah* (religious authority),[20] taught it to her secretly at night, and she started discovering for the first time how many angels hid in the letters of the Qur'an.

In short, revolutions taking place in lifeworlds are not necessarily related to major world historical transformations. This is not to say that history was not important for the people among whom I worked. As already mentioned, I frequently witnessed them making sense of their immediate lifeworlds by relating them to larger spans of time. If they, in their engagement with Islam, articulate the concern to recapture both agency and social being within a larger moral community, they frequently located the desired 'objects' in various pasts and futures. They told stories about golden pasts lost and/or hoped-for futures that sometimes echoed official transition narratives – locating the source of their loss of agency and alienation from their social worlds in some kind of collective amnesia caused by the '70 Soviet years' and fastening their hopes in the agency and future visions of the government – but equally often surrounded the Soviet past with a profound nostalgia: for example letting the experiences of 'little' events like the acquisition of a pair of glasses that made possible the reading of the Qur'an, or the participation in forbidden religious practices and the sense of complicity with other participants, colour the memory of a whole epoch. They would also attach their hopes for the future to other visions than those provided by official transition narratives, or highlight the gaps between the narratives of the post-Soviet government, on the one hand, and their experience of the actual unfolding of events on the other hand, through the ambiguous discourse of joking. The narrative perspective of Cheryl Mattingly (Mattingly 1998) has been an inspiration for me in the attempt to capture the articulation between official 'transition' narratives and local ways of making sense of experience along temporal lines.

The propensity to make sense of experience by placing it within teleological narrative wholes with beginnings, middles and ends should not be considered a universal given. As Robert Desjarlais (1996b) has argued, it hinges on a certain way of being-in-the world which is dependent on an environment that offers a lasting sense of privacy where a person can dwell within his or her own world for some length of time. Furthermore, teleological narrative making sense of experience is dependent on an environment in which it makes sense to order reality in this way; in which there is something at stake in doing so. In the context of post-Soviet Uzbekistan, tropes of time are an approved cultural framework for ordering reality. I shall argue that the tropes of time which pervade both the official discourses of the political elites and everyday

discourses of Bukhara Muslims can be conceived of as what Michael Herzfeld (1997) has termed a 'shared cultural engagement' with a common ground that may be co-opted and used for a variety of ends. Tropes of time are general and culturally approved formal frameworks through which people express and interpret various experiences, generate various meanings, conceptualize relations between Selves and Others and negotiate how the present should be. Through their engagement with sacred space – those shrines that are sanctioned by official discourses, but also the less controllable sacred places within the microcosms of their own bodies or in dream-space – they continually negotiate the contours and contents of proper 'Muslimness'. As they do so, new understandings of Islam are created, discussed and contested. Sometimes these new understandings have resonance in a larger social context; sometimes they are questioned or rejected as wrong, as heretical or irrational, or as being too 'Soviet', too 'Western', too 'extremist' or the like. Sometimes signs of the divine are found in dream-encounters with saints or in rebuilt mosques and shrines; sometimes they are found in the recovery from illness or the birth of a child; sometimes they are found in a successful business transaction or in the firing of a jealous colleague; sometimes they are found in a faded Soviet wall painting or in the taste of Coca-Cola.

Ambitions and limitations

Since I came back from my last fieldwork in September 2000, things have been changing rapidly in Uzbekistan. The September 11, 2001 attacks by al-Qaeda in New York and Washington and the following War on Terrorism, which Uzbekistan supported by offering air bases for operations inside Afghanistan, may have been of significance to the ways Islam is perceived and practised in the country. However my intention is not to pursue the impossible goal of keeping this book up-to-date. My focus is the period from 1998 to 2000, the period within which I conducted my fieldwork. With this book I hope to make a contribution to the development of an anthropology grounded in the empirical realities of Central Asia, which at the same time inscribes itself within more general discussions within the discipline of anthropology. As a consequence of the fact that former Soviet Central Asia has been inaccessible to Western anthropologists until recently, few theoretical arguments have been elaborated in a developed scholarly exchange focused on this region (Rasanayagam 2006c; Schoeberlein 2002: 6). The relative dearth of anthropological analyses and theoretical arguments based on empirical material from Central Asia can at times be frustrating, leaving one with the sense of conducting analysis in an anthropological no man's land, condemned to do a kind of analytical bricolage, and wavering between the fear of making points that are banal to other anthropologists on the one hand, and the temptation to draw sweeping conclusions on the basis of limited material on the other. However, the anthropologist in Central Asia is less bounded by what Arjun Appadurai (1986) has termed 'gatekeeping concepts'; that is, concepts which, because they are generally associated with given regions

of the world, are taken to stand for that region and become the only legitimate lens through which to view that region, and thus limit anthropological theorizing about it.

By way of ethnographic detail and grounded analysis of how people in post-Soviet Bukhara strive to create a fulfilling social existence in a changing social world, how they seek to restore what is generally perceived as a primordial, but partly forgotten, 'Muslimness' and negotiate its contours and contents, I hope that my work contributes to the understanding of everyday Islam in Central Asia – and to a deconstruction of both reified concepts of Islam in Central Asia and neo-evolutionary 'transition' conceptions of history that have surrounded the dissolution of the Soviet Union. More generally, this work is of relevance to anthropological discussions about modernity, religion and social memory. On the most general theoretical level, I pursue the question of what makes people engage in particular social realities; what conditions human practice in a changing and insecure social world.

As I am by no means an expert in Islamic theology there were, of course, limits to the nuances in people's perceptions of Islam that I was able to perceive during my fieldwork. However, this lack of knowledge was something I shared with the majority of the people I worked among in Uzbekistan. Most of them did not know Arabic, and the educated *ulama* (scholars who have been formally trained in religious sciences) judged their knowledge of Islam to be fragmentary at best. Despite this, there were no doubts in their hearts and minds that they were Muslims. A common theme in much writing about Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia has been a perceived eradication of knowledge about Islam. Writers such as Shirin Akiner (1997b: 274), Yaacov Ro'I (1995), Muriel Atkin (1995: 254), Diloram Ibrahim (1993) and M. Nazif Shahrani (1995: 279) have pointed out that although ritual practices such as those connected with life-cycle ceremonies and veneration of saints continued to be observed throughout the Soviet period, the result of the onslaught on religion was that knowledge of orthodox Islam was reduced to a minimum. It is not my intention here to follow this line of argument, comparing how Islam is understood and practised in post-Soviet Uzbekistan with some kind of orthodox, 'pure' Islam. I understand why this may be relevant from the perspective of a Muslim believer or a scholar of Islam. From an anthropological perspective, however, I find it much more interesting to bracket questions concerning the status of people's ideas and beliefs relative to Islamic orthodoxy (the definition of which is by no means unproblematic), and instead focus on the ways in which they actually live, experience and use them. In my efforts to do so it soon became clear to me that the Uzbek Muslims I worked among were themselves acutely aware that they lacked religious knowledge, that history somehow had made them forget what it meant to be Muslim – intellectually, morally and practically. It has been a major concern of mine to take this perceived ignorance seriously as a very important aspect of what it means to be Muslim in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, and to understand and conceptualize which experiential realities people are actually referring to when they talk about ignorance and oblivion.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2, 'Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia', offers an outline of the Islamic 'revival' in post-Soviet Central Asia. The focus will be on Uzbekistan, not only in order to contextualize my work in Bukhara, but also because Uzbekistan has been the regional epicentre for the struggles over what kind of Islam should be revived, and which role Islam should play, in post-Soviet society. The main combatants in this struggle and their ideas about Islam are introduced. Special attention will be given to the ambiguous policies of the post-Soviet Uzbek government towards Islam and their consequences for ordinary believers and everyday Islam.

Chapter 3, 'Sufism and the veneration of saints in Central Asia', offers an outline of the history of Sufism and veneration of saints in Central Asia, focusing in particular on the Soviet and the post-Soviet period. Special attention is given to the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* which has been very important in the region throughout history. Naqshbandiyya's teaching as well as sacred places associated with its central figures have also played important roles in the post-Soviet Uzbek government's nation-building project.

Chapter 4, 'Bukhara', situates the study in a description of Bukhara and its citizens and the wider cultural, social and economic dimensions of Uzbek society and culture.

Chapter 5, *'Ziyorat'*, explores the practice of *ziyorat*, 'pilgrimage', in Bukhara, describing its form, the reasons why people perform it, the kinds of experiences they ascribe to the practice and the ontology of sacred places in local understandings. The argument is developed that shrines serve as focal points for creative experimentation in the remaking of lifeworlds.

Chapter 6, 'Journey in the homeland', offers a discussion of how present-day Naqshbandiyya adepts in Bukhara perceive their engagement in Naqshbandiyya. An analogy is drawn between the Sufi's focus on the heart and the 'ordinary' religious practitioner's focus on the shrines: just as shrines serve as focal points for the remaking of lifeworlds, entrance into the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* initiates an inner journey that amounts to a reconstruction of the self.

In Chapter 7, 'Imagining time', the argument is developed that discourses on Islam in Uzbekistan are pervaded by tropes of time, and that sacred places serve as focal points for imagining time. A picture is drawn of the complex ways history is imagined in local understandings.

Chapter 8, 'Doing business with Bibi Seshanba', discusses the difficulties of negotiating the opportunities and moral pitfalls of the post-Soviet economy and society in the sphere of business with a focus on issues of gender identity. The chapter examines in detail a particular ritual, *Osh Bibiyo*, showing how the ritual and the myth that forms its basis are interpreted in different ways by different women.

Chapter 9, 'Conclusion: faraway so close', reiterates the main arguments presented in the book and widens the discussion to propose that the analysis of the experiential reality of Central Asia may be taken as diagnostic of the conditioning of human practice in a changing and insecure world.

2 Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia

When the Soviet empire collapsed and the former Soviet Central Asian republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – emerged as independent nation states, there was an upsurge in interest in Islam in the region. A common feature of revivalist movements in the Islamic world is the perception that the *umma* (community of believers) is characterized by backwardness and stagnation, and that a renewed commitment to the fundamentals of Islam, however defined, will bring about progress and development. This perception has also characterized Islamic revivalism among Central Asian Muslims. However, the Islamic revival in Central Asia has also had its unique characteristics connected with the specific shared historical experience of the Muslim populations of the former Soviet Union (cf. Rasanayagam 2006c: 219). As mentioned in the introduction, in the Soviet Union restrictions against religious practices had been a central aspect of government policies since the revolution. Accordingly, the Sovietization of Central Asia involved a massive assault on Islam: religious properties were confiscated, mosques and *madrasa*s were destroyed or closed, the *ulama* were persecuted and Soviet Muslims were isolated from contacts with the rest of the Muslim world (Keller 2001; Ro'I 2000). There was some respite during the Second World War when, in order to gain popular support for the war effort, an official Muslim Spiritual Administration for Central Asia and Kazakhstan was established.[1] The Muslim Spiritual Administration was charged with controlling a limited number of mosques, *madrasa*s and clerics, with appointing *imam*s to lead local congregations, with supervising limited access to religious education, training and worship, and with working out a limited practice of Islam which was compatible with Soviet citizenship.[2] However, as Johan Rasanayagam has noted, the main part of the population was prevented from attending the official mosques: people in positions of authority such as government officials or teachers, as well as the young would have risked their jobs if they had done so. Thus, the orthodoxy that was being preached in the mosques could not extend much more widely than the official *ulama* themselves. For the majority of the population, Islamic learning was limited to lessons from unofficial *mullah*s (Rasanayagam 2006b).

Adeeb Khalid has convincingly argued that the most important consequence of Central Asia's isolation from the wider Muslim world was that Islam was

rendered synonymous with tradition (Khalid 2003). Although religious observance continued to be widespread, it was not what was most important about being a Muslim. Rather, belonging to Islam became a marker of national identity,[3] for which no personal piety or observance was necessary; a marker which distinguished Central Asians from outsiders (ibid.: 578–9).

The years around the breaking up of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian republics were characterized by a sense among their Muslim populations that the 70 years of Soviet rule and repression of religion had made them forget what it means to be Muslim. There was therefore a strong interest among them in reviving and exploring Islam. What it was that needed to be revived, however, was not clear. Some continued to subordinate Islam to nationalist discourses, making the revival of Islam merely one aspect of a broader reclaiming of the national cultural patrimony and arguing that what needed to be revived was a local, customary way of being Muslim. Others, on the contrary, argued that what was needed was a revival of Islam as cleansed from local customary practice. This chapter offers a bird's eye view of the Islamic 'revival' in post-Soviet Central Asia. The focus is on Uzbekistan, which has been the regional epicentre for the struggles over the meaning of being Muslim and the role Islam should play in society (cf. Akiner 2003: 117). Special attention is given to the ambiguous policies of the post-Soviet Uzbek government towards Islam and their consequences for ordinary believers.

Independence, nationalism and Islam

As Benedict Anderson noted in *Imagined Communities*, his classic work on the origin and spread of nationalism, though nation states are new and historical, the nations to which they give political expression are always imagined to emerge out of an immemorial past and glide into a limitless future. They are solid communities moving through homogeneous, empty time,[4] but they have forgotten the experience of this community, and so their identity must be narrated (Anderson 2003: 26, 204–5). Independence in Central Asian was in fact characterized by various efforts to narrate national identities: political elites began to make appeals to national traditions and to encourage pervasive and self-assured national identities, built on images of their nations' great historical antiquity and importance. Institutions and streets were renamed and new flags, new national anthems and new slogans celebrating independence and nation came out. History was rewritten: the institutionalization of new myths and histories – new ways of establishing the historical categories, periods and events that give meaning to individual and collective experience – was attempted. The dominant view of history put forward was still a variant of the Enlightenment or modernist one that had characterized Soviet historiography, and which saw history as a single trajectory of progress. Only the contributions of various historical epochs to this trajectory of progress were re-evaluated: if Soviet historiography had read Central Asia's past as prologue to the Soviet present, casting the Central Asians as temporal refugees, removed but not yet redeemed from a static past of custom

and ignorance (cf. Norton 1993: 453–7), now Central Asian nation builders reduced the Soviet period to the status of a temporal interruption in their national history.

Independence in Central Asia also opened the door to an Islamic resurgence. Islam had started reappearing in the public sphere in the late Gorbachev period, which was one of the signs that the relations between centre and periphery were changing.[5] Had it not been clear before, it became clear at that time that although most of them had been prevented from attending official Islamic institutions, Islam had never ceased to inform people's lives. Islam mattered to men, young people, urban populations, skilled workers, people with higher educations and Communist Party members, not just to uneducated women and elderly people of the countryside. In this period there was an explosion of interest in Islam among all sections and age groups in Central Asian society, perhaps most notably in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and among Uzbeks in the southern parts of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. While many citizens continued to lead a rather secular life, considering themselves to be Muslims but not engaging in religious practices, others began to observe rituals such as the five daily prayers or the fast of the Ramadan month openly, or – in the case of women – to adopt the *hijab*.[6] Some began to claim a greater role for Islam in social and political life: non-official Islamic groups appeared from underground, and new ones emerged, partly under the influence of ties that were built with other parts of the Islamic world. In the 1980s, thousands of Central Asians had been drafted into the Red Army to fight the Afghan mujahidin who were resisting the 1979 invasion by the Soviet Union. Many of these Central Asian soldiers were deeply affected by the Islamic dedication of their opponents. According to Ahmed Rashid, some of them actually joined the Mujahidin. Also according to Rashid, other Uzbek and Tajik Muslims clandestinely travelled to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia at this time to study in Deobandi[7] *madrasa*s or to train as guerrilla fighters so that they could join the Mujahidin (Rashid 2002: 43–5). In addition, Wahhabism[8] began to play a more influential role in Central Asia as Saudi funds began to flow into the region (ICG 2001a: 2; Rashid 2002: 43–5).

Soviet leadership increasingly saw the need to build a bulwark against the growing influence of Muslim groups operating outside the official framework. The perceived danger was that these groups might mobilize popular resentment of the social and economic problems that haunted the country in this period. Where the government had initially reacted to the resurgence of Islam with increased repression, by 1989 it changed its policy fundamentally: now it began to cater to Islam through its official representatives, while tolerating the activities of non-official religious organizations. This was an attempt to channel and control dissident Muslim forces, to enhance popular support and legitimacy, and to co-opt religious leaders and Islamic ethical values in the fight against corruption, fraud and other malpractices perceived to be to blame for the state's economic problems (Akiner 2003). The period saw increasing tolerance for Islamic symbols and observances. Anti-religious propaganda virtually disappeared from the media, and secular authorities began to support Islamic communities through

such measures as support for the building and restoration of mosques. Medieval Central Asian Islamic scholars were rehabilitated, their teaching being interpreted as compatible with Soviet values. A demonstration by believers in Tashkent resulted in the overthrow and replacement of the long-time Soviet-era *mufti* (i.e. head of the Muslim Spiritual Administration) of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Shamsuddin Boboxon, who was accused of womanizing and drinking alcohol. The new *mufti*, Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, became a deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet and began to appear in the media, commenting on social issues from the standpoint of Islamic doctrine. New heads – all younger men – were also appointed for the Tajik, Turkmen and Kazakh branches of the Muslim Spiritual Administration (Akiner 2003; Critchlow 1991: 167–8; ICG 2001a: 2; Olcott 1995: 26).

This revival and rehabilitation of Islam continued immediately after independence. In all the Central Asian republics Islam was recognized as one of the foundations of national culture. Religious literature became increasingly available and programmes on Islam were broadcast on radio and television. Many unregistered *mullah*s were registered by the Muslim Boards and integrated into the official structures. Contacts with Muslim communities in other parts of the Islamic world from which Soviet Central Asia had largely been cut off were established; activists arrived in large numbers, proselytizing for different variants of Islam, and opportunities were opened for Central Asians to study Islam abroad. Mosques and *madrasa*s were opened and rebuilt throughout the region, many of them outside the official framework, and with the help of funding from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Gulf states, Turkey and elsewhere. Funding from abroad also made possible the distribution of free copies of the Qur'an and other Islamic literature translated into Russian and other native languages (Heyat 2004; ICG 2001a: 13; Rashid 2002: 5, 55). Leading government figures and other elite figures tried to represent themselves as born-again Muslims, reciting prayers and verses from the Qur'an before public speeches and cabinet meetings. Though they were former communist intellectuals and Party apparatchiks who had originally been put into power by Moscow, charged with containing and curtailing Islam, Islam Karimov and Askar Akaev held the new constitution in one hand and the Qur'an in the other when they swore their respective oaths of office as the first presidents of Independent Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan respectively (Akiner 2003). In 1992 Karimov went to Mecca, performing the *umra*[9] (Olcott 1995: 22).

In the beginning of the 1990s, the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia and Kazakhstan was split into individual boards, or *muftiyat*s, by republic, each of them under the control of their respective government, and each of them performing the same functions as the Soviet-era board: appointing and registering *imam*s, registering mosques and monitoring religious practice (Akiner 2003: 103).

Appearing Others of the post-Soviet order

Various Islamic groups and movements outside government control also made their entry into the public realm around the time of independence, offering other interpretations of Islam and using Islam to other means than the Central Asian governments.

In October 1991, a Tajik branch of the Islamic Rebirth Party (IRP) – an all-Union Islamic Rebirth Party, which was founded in Astrakhan in June 1990 – was registered. As its name indicates its aim was to revive Islam. The Tajik branch of the IRP came to head a diverse coalition[10] opposed to the government. The failure of the government and the opposition to reach any compromise eventually was to lead to the outbreak of civil war in mid-1992. Although a complex range of interests was involved – regional interests included – the defenders of the old order were largely successful in portraying the opposition coalition as Islamic extremists, blurring the distinctions between its various constituents, and portraying themselves as the sole hope for secularism and stability. The conflict was formally brought to a close in June 1997, when a peace treaty was signed. The IRP, which had been outlawed in Tajikistan in 1993, was again legalized in the 1999 run-up parliamentary elections (Akiner 2003: 100–2; Atkin 1995).

More radical Islamist groups also emerged on the political scene in the years around the dissolution of the Soviet Union, notably in Uzbekistan and the adjacent areas of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Akiner 2003: 104). They were radical in the sense that they called for a radical change to the social, political and moral order, including to the secular nature of the Central Asian states. They were highly critical of the Central Asian governments and the government-sponsored Muslim administrations whom they accused of being corrupt and spiritually bankrupt, and they wanted to purge Islam of what they believed were the distortions that had been introduced over time (Akiner 2003: 104–6). As such they were similar to radical 'fundamentalist', 'reformist' or 'revivalist' movements which have appeared in other parts of the Islamic world, notably from the mid-twentieth century onwards, and which have largely been driven by disillusion with modernity or more particularly the unfulfilled promises of Western-inspired governments; with corruption, poverty, criminality and a perceived degeneration of morals in society.

One of the more radical groups which appeared in Central Asia was *Adolat* (Justice). *Adolat*, whose leading members included Tohir Yo'ldoshev and Juma Namangani, portrayed itself as a response to moral decay, corruption and social injustice, and demanded an Islamic revolution. In 1990, the movement began – with Saudi funds and some 5,000 young followers – to build a new mosque and a *madrasa* in the city of Namangan in the Ferghana Valley. Yo'ldoshev began to impose elements of the *shari'a* on the population, such as making people read their *namoz* (prescribed prayer) regularly and insisting that women wear *hijab*. He also set up neighbourhood-watch committees to combat crime: vigilantes patrolled the streets maintaining law and order and ensuring that shopkeepers

did not raise their prices. Mosques and *madrasa*s run by *Adolat* sprang up across the Ferghana Valley. In December 1991, *Adolat* members seized the building in Namangan which housed the headquarters of the Communist Party and started a movement that they claimed was a *jihad* to remove President Karimov. For a time the government accepted Yo'ldoshev's rule in Namangan, and *Adolat* and other radical groups were relatively free to criticize the government, but in March 1992 the government cracked down: *Adolat* was banned, and 27 members were arrested. *Adolat* leaders, including Yo'ldoshev and Namangani, fled to Tajikistan, where they joined the Tajikistan Islamic Renaissance Party, which was about to plunge the country into civil war. Later, Yo'ldoshev and Namangani moved to Afghanistan where they would make up the core of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (see below) (Rashid 2002: 137–9; ICG 2001a: 4).

Authoritarianism in Uzbekistan

From that time it became increasingly clear that Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov had no intention to yield any of his government's monopoly on power to any kind of opposition. In 1992 the Islamic Renaissance Party was also banned in Uzbekistan. The crackdown on unofficial religious activities, which was to become the rule from this time onward, has only been one expression of a more general tendency in the Karimov government to repress civil and political freedom. Thus, at around the same time that the crackdown on unofficial Islam started, the secular opposition in Uzbekistan was also effectively eliminated.[11] Since then, Karimov has run an authoritarian state, crushing dissent, banning all serious political opposition and exerting complete control over the media. Most notably, he has launched repeated crackdowns on Islamic activism in an increasing effort to limit the influence of unofficial Islamic movements and groups. Independent human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and organizations such as the International Crisis Group have regularly documented how these crackdowns, which have been implemented mainly by the security service, itself born of the republic-level KGB offices, have hit not only Islamic radicals or militants, but also the families of militants, as well as thousands of ordinary pious practising Muslims, who have been exiled, jailed, tortured and sentenced to long prison terms for anti-state activity and alleged links with Islamic fundamentalists. In 1997 a law was passed that made it illegal to base a political party on religious principles. In May 1998, an earlier law on 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations' was amended and new restrictions on freedom of worship and religious groups were imposed.[12] Though the law guarantees freedom of religion, at the same time it violates many international standards, including human rights commitments Uzbekistan has made. It demands the registration of all mosques and religious groups with more than 100 members. The establishment of mosques, religious associations and the teaching of theology demands official permission too. All imported religious literature must be authorized by the state censor.

Missionary activity is banned. Religious political parties and public movements are illegal. The teaching of theology is only permitted in official religious schools, and the wearing of 'ritual dress' in public is prohibited. The law has been reinforced by criminal and legal codes, anti-terrorism legislation and a series of presidential decrees and orders (ICG 2003a).

New laws on religion and religious associations were also passed in the other Central Asian states after independence. Only in Turkmenistan are they restrictive to a similar degree. Also here the state maintains a strict control of the official clergy, while any clergy opposing the government or propagating religious ideas not in conformity with the official position risk dismissal or worse. Furthermore, non-traditional denominations are barred from basic activities (2003c: 30–1)

Hizb ut-Tahrir

In the mid-1990s Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (the Islamic Freedom Party) was introduced into Central Asia. It has since become the most popular, widespread underground movement in the region, in particular in Uzbekistan, which has been the primary focus of its activities.[13] It has, however, also been active in Kyrgyzstan, mainly among the ethnic Uzbek population in the southern part of the country, and in southern Kazakhstan, again primarily among the ethnic Uzbek minority. In Tajikistan, where the 1997 peace accord brought the IRP back into politics but forced it to compromise with the government on a wide range of issues, a political vacuum was produced in which Hizb ut-Tahrir has attempted to expand its influence. In Turkmenistan Hizb ut-Tahrir has apparently also become active, trying to win support in prisons and labour camps (Akiner 2003: 105; Heyat 2004: 286; ICG 2003b; ICG 2003c: 31). According to the research of the International Crisis Group, a rough figure by 2003 was probably 15,000–20,000 members throughout Central Asia, most of them in Uzbekistan (ICG 2003b).

Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in 1953 by the Palestinian legal scholar and political activist Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909–77). It is an international organization which is active in a number of Middle Eastern, Asian and Western European countries. It has the vision of re-establishing the historical Caliphate that will bring together the entire *umma* in an Islamic state where *shari'a* is applied to all spheres of life. Although its rhetoric is harsh and, notably, strongly anti-Semitic,[14] the organization has not explicitly advocated the use of violence. Instead, Hizb ut-Tahrir has advocated the winning over of mass support, claiming that one day these supporters will rise up in peaceful demonstrations and overthrow regimes throughout the Muslim world, including Central Asia. Hizb ut-Tahrir leaders also deny that they have formal links with other radical and more militant Islamist movements. There has never been a proven case of Hizb ut-Tahrir involvement in any violent or terrorist act in Central Asia. Some of its members, however, do seem to have become dissatisfied with the policy of non-violence. Of these, some fled to Afghanistan, where they allegedly joined the

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (see below) (ICG 2003b: 24; Rashid 2002: 132–3). But according to the International Crisis Group, there is no evidence of significant organizational or ideological links with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (ICG 2003b: 32). Although Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international organization with a central ideology, much of its success in Central Asia stems from its ability to respond to local concerns (ibid.: 14). Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia distributes leaflets that are issued in other countries as well, dealing with issues such as the Palestine conflict, and leaflets that link global and ideological concerns to local issues such as corruption, poverty and unemployment. President Karimov is a prime target, his rule being branded as 'tyranny of the Jew' (ibid.: 25–7). Hizb ut-Tahrir has been met with heavy-handed repression in Central Asia, not least in Uzbekistan, where thousands of members have been arrested, charged with anti-constitutional activities, inciting religious hatred and attempted overthrow of the state, and sentenced to very long prison terms.[15]

As an underground organization, Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia is difficult to study, and knowledge of it is limited. According to Ahmed Rashid and the International Crisis Group, it relies on a cell structure: at the lowest level, members are organized in cells with five members on average. New cells are created by recruiting mainly from existing informal social networks. The head of each cell is the only person who has access to the next level of the party organization, i.e. the district level. A regional representative is appointed by the central political council of the international party (ICG 2003b: 20; Rashid 2002: 117–24). In Central Asia the party works primarily through the dissemination of literature, most frequently by distributing leaflets in people's mailboxes during the night. Female relatives of imprisoned members have occasionally staged demonstrations in defence of their husbands, sons and brothers. Trials and release of members have been used for publicity. The organization also proselytizes among non-member prisoners (ICG 2003b: 22–3).

According to the International Crisis Group, which has conducted interviews with Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Central Asia, the majority of members are unemployed young men.[16] While their motives for joining the organization are various, a strong, recurrent factor is a sense that their aspirations have been blocked by society and the state, that social change has disrupted or threatened their place in society or the family. They express a lack of belief in the future in a society characterized by increasing poverty and unemployment, corruption and nepotism. Hizb ut-Tahrir addresses these experiences, provides explanations for any lack of success in life and, not least, a perceived opportunity to do something to challenge a repressive government that does not allow any serious opposition parties to work (ICG 2003b: 14–15).

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Another central, and more militant, Islamic opposition movement, *O'zbekiston Islom Harakati*, 'The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan', was established in the course of the 1990s around a core of exiled Islamic opposition leaders and sup-

porters who had set up bases in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. In the course of their exile they developed close relations with Islamic militants there and in other parts of the Islamic world and came under the patronage of Taliban and al-Qaeda. It is thought that they adopted a mixture of the Taliban's Deobandist interpretation of Islam and al-Qaeda's radical Wahhabism. According to Ahmed Rashid, they managed to build up a wide, diverse network of fundraising and weapons supply from Islamic groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan and sponsors in the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia (Rashid 2002: 166–7). The two most prominent leaders of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan were Tohir Yo'ldoshev and Juma Namangani, former leading members of the *Adolat* movement. During the summer of 1998 the two met in Kabul and on 25 August 1999, they issued an official communiqué which declared *jihad* on the Karimov regime and called for its overthrow (Rashid 2002: 147–50). Shortly after, around 1,000 fighters from the movement succeeded in entering southern Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan through high mountain passes and twice took several hostages who were only released after ransom had been paid. The insurgents demanded that the Kyrgyz government give them leave to pass freely through Kyrgyz territory to Uzbekistan. Confrontations between the insurgents and the Kyrgyz military continued for two months, during which time Kyrgyz troops showed themselves to be powerless to expel the insurgents from several villages. Uzbekistan offered military support and, without a go-ahead from either country, its air force bombed the territory of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (ICG 2001a: 7). The incursions began anew in August 2000, this time initially in Uzbekistan's southern province of Surxondaryo, in a high mountain area on the border with Tajikistan. Within a week, separate incursions had begun in several places in southern Kyrgyzstan, as well as in the mountains just to the east of the Uzbek capital Tashkent. Over a month passed before the military drove the fighters from Uzbekistan's territory (ICG 2001a: 7–9). The forces of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan seem to have been largely destroyed or scattered by the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan that started in 2001. In December 2001, reports suggested that its leader Namangani had been killed in Afghanistan and that his followers had fled to Pakistan or split into small groups inside Afghanistan (ICG 2003b: 14, note 66).

The Tashkent bombings

The campaigns against unofficial Islam in Uzbekistan intensified after a series of car bomb explosions in the centre of Tashkent on 16 February 1999 which killed 16 and wounded more than 100. Nobody claimed responsibility for the bombings. They were officially interpreted as an attempt on Karimov's life. All opposition groups, including both Islamic militants and exiled secular political groups, were accused of being responsible and of conspiring with an international coalition of Islamic extremists. After this event, Karimov instituted a massive crackdown. The number of detentions and arrests of persons suspected of relations with unofficial Islamic organizations increased dramatically. An

all-out campaign was declared against Hizb ut-Tahrir in particular, whom Uzbek authorities accused of conspiring with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.[17]

Ahmed Rashid has called the Tashkent bombings 'perhaps the most important incident affecting the way Karimov would come to treat Muslims of any kind in Uzbekistan' (Rashid 2002: 149), and he may be right in this point. In any case, it soon became the most important reference point for Karimov in his efforts to justify his authoritarian policy. In many ways, 16 February 1999 came to play the same role for people in Uzbekistan as September 11, 2001 plays in the minds of many people in the West. When evil in the form of terror strikes at home, in the known lifeworld or the world that one identifies with, trust – that is, the idea that one is able to predict the intentions of one's fellow human beings – is undermined. The vulnerability of society is exposed, and existence suddenly seems highly complex and risky. When I came back to do my second fieldwork in 2000, for many people the date 16 February 1999 had become an important reference point: for some, it stood out as a reminder of the fragility of life and of society as they knew it; a reminder that evil may be just around the corner. For others, it stood out as a date that marked when it became particularly difficult to be a practising Muslim in Uzbekistan.

Discourses on 'Wahhabism' in Uzbekistan

In the official discourses of the Uzbek government no significant distinctions are made between the various unwanted Islamic movements and ideologies, let alone between the nuances in their specific goals, doctrines and political programmes. Most often, they are just referred to as 'extremists' or 'Wahhabis'. The term 'Wahhabi' is widely used in what Muriel Atkin (Atkin 2000) has aptly called the 'rhetoric of islamophobia' in the whole of the former Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan, as a shorthand for the general concept of Islamic menace, and as a general term for Muslims who are considered to be threats to the established system (cf. also Abduvakhitov 1993; Akiner 2003: 104; ICG 2001a; Rashid 2002: 46).

The post-Soviet Uzbek government has persistently justified its authoritarian line and deflected the occasional criticism of its poor human rights record by referring to the existence of 'Wahhabism' and the threat of Islamic terrorism, and by arguing that without a certain degree of authoritarianism, Uzbekistan risks ending up like a new Afghanistan, or in a state of civil war like Tajikistan (cf. Akiner 2003: 102).[18] The regime has based its legitimacy first and foremost on the promise that it will maintain peace, stability and order and keep the country clear of the war, terror and chaos that has plagued these neighbouring countries. It has unceasingly argued that a hard line is necessary in the war against terror and in the effort to maintain order and stability. This argument has effectively limited the international community's critique of the authoritarian regime in Uzbekistan.[19] As Adeeb Khalid has aptly put it, in the post-Cold War world order 'anti-fundamentalism' provides a language that allows regimes – liberal democratic as much as authoritarian – to position themselves on the right

side of the fence, on the side of Reason, Enlightenment and Secularism, and against fanaticism, obscurantism and reaction (Khalid 2003: 591). Karimov's argument gained increasing validity in the light of the September 11, 2001 attacks by al-Qaeda[20] and the global discourse of 'War on Terrorism' that came into being in the wake of these attacks, a discourse that has constituted the figure of 'the terrorist' as 'the wild man' of our contemporary imagination. The terrorist is an unpredictable 'wild man' who makes his appearance when and where he is least expected, and who is unapproachable and impossible to understand, remaining outside the reach of reason; he is a 'wild man' who poses one of the most serious threats to civilization, to the world order (cf. Mahmood 2001; Zulaika and Douglass 1997).

Official government sources have persistently denied any important local causes for the appearance of radical Islamist opposition movements in the country. On the contrary, in the official discourses of President Karimov these 'wild men' are represented as external elements, foreigners, forcing their way into, or rather sneaking up on, Uzbek society under cover, attacking it from inside at its weak and vulnerable points: the young, the poor and the naive, whom they lead astray. Sometimes the 'Wahhabis' are described as religious fanatics professing a kind of Islam which is fundamentally incompatible with the Uzbek national character, an anachronism in a modern world and an anti-modern obstacle to the country's development (see also Chapter 7).[21] At other times they are rather described as power-hungry cynics who are not driven by ideological convictions at all, but who use the cover of religious devotion to engage in criminal activities – notably drug dealing – and who seduce immature and naive Uzbeks with utopian ideas and promises of easy money (see for example Karimov 1997: 22).

The government-controlled media have also launched a relentless propaganda campaign picturing strictly observant Muslims as terrorists and fanatics. And they have warned the population to be vigilant in guarding itself against this 'enemy from within'. When the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan conducted incursions into Uzbekistan in 2000, during my second period of fieldwork there, the Uzbek media at first remained silent. People only heard about the incursions from the Russian media, or through rumours born of anxiety that quickly fuelled even more massive anxiety among people and surrounded the attacking Islamic movement with mystery. Some believed that only a few terrorists had crossed the border; some talked about a big army and behaved as if a war was breaking out. In Bukhara there were continuous rumours about terrorists having been assassinated in neighbouring villages. Some people were afraid of going to the bazaar or other public places. Fear became routinized to some extent; that is, it became something people somehow managed to live with (cf. Green 1994; Taussig 1992). As Linda Green has noted in the context of violence and terror in Guatemalan society, while people can learn to accommodate themselves to terror and fear, low-intensity panic continues to lurk in the shadow of waking consciousness and frequently surfaces in dreams and chronic illness (Green 1994: 231). In Bukhara, paranoia entered the very depths of many people's

being: the daughter in my host-family, Nargiza (who was also one of my field assistants), had recurring nightmares about ugly, dirty wild men with long beards and bloodstained knives. The media finally broke the silence after a couple of days with massive coverage of the incursions. During the month that passed before the Uzbek military drove the insurgents away, President Karimov repeatedly declared that everything was under control (he actually said this so many times that it was easy to figure out that things were definitely not under control). The fighters from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan were represented not unlike the wild men from Nargiza's nightmares – as incarnations of radical otherness. Locals from the regions where the incursions took place were interviewed, insisting that they were not afraid, and that they were ready to defend their country with their own hands, if necessary. These locals, in other words, played their roles perfectly as the heroes of official discourses, declaring their willingness to engage in a fight against the foreign evil threatening the nation's future.

Rumours circulated that terrorists would strike on the occasion of Independence Day on 1 September. Many people in Bukhara preferred to stay at home in spite of the fact that Independence Day is a major public holiday with various events and entertainment taking place all over the city, and in spite of the fact that this particular Independence Day celebration was planned as an occasion on which the Uzbek people would show that they were not afraid of the evil forces threatening their country. The authorities in Bukhara apparently feared that nobody would dare show up at the stadium where a big Independence Day show would be put on. In any case, a few days before the event, the mother in my host family came back from work and told us that orders had been given for each of the major state-sector workplaces in the city – including her own place of work – to send five employees to take part in the event. She had 'volunteered': 'I am old, it does not matter if I am blown up', she remarked sarcastically and told how she imagined how everyone there would sit with smiling faces while being scared to death. And indeed, what was shown on television from the celebrations were happy smiling faces.

More disturbing pictures also found their way to the television screens. The media brought us the funerals of dead soldiers who had lost their young lives in the battle against the insurgents, and interviews with their mourning relatives: martyrs who had sacrificed their lives – or the lives of their loved ones – for the higher cause of the nation. There were also pictures of 'Wahhabis' liquidated by the military and the security service and 'Wahhabi' collaborators – that is people who had hidden or otherwise helped the insurgents – caught, confessing and repenting everything behind bars, telling stories of having been led astray by the prospect of easy money: that is, assuming the emplotment of their acts offered by official discourses, apparently recognizing them deep down in their innermost being, and thereby confirming the truth of these discourses in a most effective way. Other narratives were censored. A television journalist of my acquaintance told me that she had interviewed a 'woman with *hijab*' who had been arrested for hiding some 'Wahhabi-terrorists' after the incursions in 2000.

The woman had been so bright, the journalist told me. She knew everything about Islam and had ten answers ready for every question asked by the journalist. In the end, they did not broadcast the interview; or, more precisely, only broadcasted a few clips from the interview, because they were afraid of the influence this woman could have on people. They were afraid that she would seduce them.

Around the same time, an *O'zing uying o'zi asrang!* (Watch your own house yourself!) campaign was introduced as part of a national anti-terror campaign: posters and billboards with this slogan were put up everywhere in the cities, on buses and public buildings, calling on people to be vigilant, even where they felt most safe and among people whom they trusted the most. *Mahalla* (local community, see Chapter 4) committees were instructed to step up their activity to ensure public order and enhance people's vigilance. The journalist referred to above performed an experiment together with some colleagues that was intended to test the alertness of people in Bukhara: they placed replica bombs around the city – in stairways, at waste disposal sites, in shops, at playgrounds – and awaited people's reactions. Nobody really reacted, and this, concluded the journalists in a broadcast, was evidence of the necessity of the campaign, the need for people to be more suspicious.

Government-sponsored Islam[22]

Central Asian governments have not only sought to control Islam but also to co-opt Islam as an element in their state-building projects and as sources of legitimacy – notwithstanding the fact that the separation between state and religion is enshrined in all the constitutions of the Central Asian states. In all the Central Asian states Islam has been presented as an important aspect of the national heritage (cf. Akiner 2003: 101–2). The situation in Turkmenistan has been the most odd. Here President Saparmurat Niyasov has combined repression of independent religious activity with the creation and promotion of a spiritual creed centred on his own personality. In 2001 he published the book *Ruhnama* (Book of the Soul) containing a mixture of folk sayings, his personal history and Turkmen history, philosophy and tradition as interpreted by himself. Not only is it obligatory reading for schoolchildren and university students, it is also read in mosques and treated on a par with the Qur'an. Niyasov has allegedly enquired of religious authorities in the Muslim world whether he could declare himself a prophet (ICG 2003a: 34–6; ICG 2003c).

The leadership of the other Central Asian states has showed less tendencies to megalomania. All, however, have used Islam as a means to promote their ideologies and legitimize their rule. Also Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan has regularly referred to Islam in political speeches and interviews, lamenting the destruction during the Soviet years of Islamic culture and ancient moral principles relating to Islam, or more precisely to Uzbek *musulmonchilik* ('Muslimness').

In the pamphlet *Olloh qalbimizda, yuragimizda* (Allah in our hearts, in our souls) (Karimov 2000), originally an interview with Islam Karimov after the

Tashkent bombings of 16 February 1999 and the following mass arrests, Karimov reflects on the role Islam, or what he terms *musulmonchilik* or *ota-bobolarimizning dini* (the religion of our ancestors), plays in the life of the Uzbek people and its influence on people's spiritual world. Uzbek 'Muslimness', Karimov argues, is not Islam as such, but Islam as interpreted by local scholars and *pir*s ('saints', spiritual guides). Uzbek 'Muslimness' is inseparable from national values and morality as such (ibid.: 5–11).

> Religion is in our blood, it has been so thoroughly absorbed into our consciousness that no power, no agitation whatsoever can make it disappear. It is possible to describe our people's thousand-year history, today's spiritual life and religion by saying that Allah is in our hearts, in our souls.
>
> (Karimov 2000: 7)

> When we talk about the Muslim religion, we firstly think of Allah and his messenger and our great scholars and great *imam*s who have been spiritually close to ourselves. We consider these, our excellent men, born on our propitious land, whose blessed names the whole Islamic world has taken into their language with boundless respect, like the *pir*s Imom al-Buxoriy, Imom at-Termiziy, Xoja Bahouddin Naqshband, Ahmad Yassaviy, Abdulxoliq G'ijduvoniy, Zamashariy. We connect our spiritual life with these great names. Who can deny this truth? Why did we restore these our great ancestors' respected names during the first days of our independence? Because these great people's holy names and immortal heritage have been firmly connected with our holy religion. One cannot separate them from each other. We cannot imagine our religion without these great names or these great names without our religion.
>
> (ibid.: 10–11)[23]

Referring to himself Karimov writes:

> I am also a child of this people; I am a son of this nation. *Alhamdulilloh* ['praise be to Allah'], as a Muslim child, Islamic understandings and feelings specific for my people are also established in my heart, in my soul, and I will neither depart from my own convictions in this world nor the next.
>
> (Karimov 2000: 8)

> I, as the leader of Uzbekistan, will never allow any evil powers to despise our holy Islam, our ancestors' conviction, our Muslim citizens, to endanger life in our society. I know that this is my holy duty, not only as president, but also as a Muslim human being.
>
> (ibid.: 12)[24]

The ideology that Karimov promotes is associated with himself, but at the same time is pictured as predetermined and natural, as based on a natural con-

sensus. In other words, Karimov uses identification as a mode of legitimation, that is, he makes ideology seem not the product of any ruling group's selfinterest, but instead the cultural, intellectual and spiritual product of the entire nation, thus creating identification between the Uzbek nation, himself and his policies.

While Karimov speaks of an internalized 'Muslimness' which is essentially a part of the Uzbek national character and which is in the blood of the Uzbeks as some sort of natural antidote to political, extremist versions of Islam, he also regularly refers to the existence of an ideological and moral void among the Uzbek population caused by the 70 years of Soviet rule, describing this void as one of the main reasons why extremist Islamic movements have resonance among certain segments of the population (see for example Berger 1991: 30; Karimov 1997: 22–3). Although 'Muslimness' is essentially there in the hearts of the Uzbeks – predestined, based on a natural consensus – Karimov also sees the revival or restoration of this Uzbek 'Muslimness' after a period of dormancy as the state's task (cf. Karimov 1997: 85–93).

Uzbeks are continuously presented with their government's ideas about proper 'Muslimness' in their ordinary engagement with a world apparently saturated with the works of the Uzbek propaganda machine. They are presented with them when watching television, listening to the radio and reading newspapers – all media which are subject to strict censorship and government control,[25] which have broadcasted and printed Karimov's speeches and addresses in the parliament on the issue of Islam, and which have loyally followed him and other government figures when they have demonstrated their devotion to Islam through participation in Islamic holidays, conferences on issues relating to Islam, or inaugurations of Islamic educational institutions and restored mosques and shrines. Uzbeks are presented with ideas about Uzbek 'Muslimness' when studying the curricula of schools and universities which constitute important channels for the ideology of national independence: The main body of Karimov's works, published in a series of numbered volumes reminiscent of the 'Works of Lenin', besides being propagated through the mass media, state institutions and cultural associations, is required reading at all levels of the educational system in Uzbekistan[26] (cf. also March 2002: 371; Megoran 1999: 106). Uzbeks are presented with ideas about 'Muslimness' through government-approved religious publications (cf. Akiner 2003: 117; Rasanayagam 2006a: 378) and on the omnipresent billboards that meet them in even the most remote corners of the country, feeding them with slogan-like versions of the ideology of the day. They are presented with them through the official and unofficial dress codes of institutions in which they study and work, and of the local societies in which they live. And they are presented with them, of course, when they visit an official mosque or *madrasa*, or when they visit a state-sponsored shrine (cf. Chapter 3).

In Uzbekistan, the *muftiyat*, though formally a non-governmental institution, also remains under tight control of state authorities. The work of the *muftiyat* is closely monitored by a Committee or Council for Religious Affairs, a body that serves as the interface between the government and religious communities (Akiner 2003: 103).[27] The *muftiyat* provides *imam*s serving at official mosques

with the basic themes about which they are expected to talk during the *khutba* (the sermon held in connection with the Friday prayer). During the *khutba* they often talk about the benefits of independence, including the freedom of religion brought about by it, and praise the president and the government (ICG 2001a; ICG 2003a). *Imam*s are not only supervised by the *muftiyat*, but also by local provincial governments, the national security service and local *mahalla* committees. According to the International Crisis Group, many *imam*s perceive the level of observation by security agents attending mosques to be higher than before the post-independence government embraced Islam as a part of national culture (ibid.). This issue is not something that I have been able to do proper research into myself (apart from having it confirmed by people who regularly attended mosque), as it was not common for women in Bukhara to attend mosques, and as I did not establish relations with any *imam*s confidential enough to ask them about such politically sensitive matters.

However, I got the chance to visit and talk with representatives of another institution of the official Islamic establishment several times, the women's *madrasa* in Bukhara, which opened in 1992. One of the times I was there, Shoira, a teacher of *shari'a* and *Hadith*,[28] gave me a formal introduction to the place. She took me on a guided tour, showing me offices and classrooms decorated with schedules and Qur'an quotations side-by-side with Karimov quotations, the Uzbek national flag and national anthem. Then we went to the *madrasa*'s mosque, where she pulled out a notebook and began to talk, alternating between improvisation and quoting from the book:

> Islam is the source of culture and good morality [. . .] Islam is tradition. As Islam Karimov has written in his *Olloh qalbimizda, yuragimizda* (Allah in our hearts, in our souls), the Uzbek people cannot live without religion, people will always carry Islam in their hearts [. . .] Thanks to president Islam Karimov it has again become possible to open *madrasa*s, mosques . . . also an Islamic University has been opened.[29] There we can meet our religion again. Thanks to Karimov, we achieved our independence without war, without blood. Without independence we would still be a colony, and we would have to learn Russian history. We would not know our history, religion. We understand Islam as faith, as goodness, as being generous, as being clean, eating *halal luqma*,[30] not to lose one's temper, and as protecting our national culture and traditions and the people who surround us. It is like a chest filled with knowledge. For example Alisher Navoi[31] and Ibn Sina[32] and others who showed humanity great things. They were locked up in this chest, and only after independence we were able to find the key for it. Our President Islam Karimov introduced a law on freedom of faith. Therefore, our people have again got new priorities. Religious education and the history of Islam have again become free. Everybody is free [. . .] It is possible to compare with India and Mahatma Gandhi. For two hundred years India was a British colony. Mahatma Gandhi fought for independence, even when he was in prison, and he was capable of freeing India. Our president

> has done the same thing. For 70 years we were a colony, we lost our religion, traditions, culture and spirituality, but thanks to God we have now achieved our independence [. . .] 'We will not give you to anybody, Uzbekistan'[33] – we have to follow this motto. And we must watch our own house ourselves.[34] Thank God, we are happy to live in our own country. May our country be rich, may our president be in good health. May Allah save everybody, create friendship between people. May everything improve year for year. May Islam live forever in people's hearts![35]

I have quoted extensively from my transliteration of the recorded interview in order to give an impression of the torrent of ideological words Shoira presented me with. In Shoira's talk Islam is unambiguously related to national history, and President Karimov is pictured as the grand hero who has brought the nation back to its own history, rehabilitating its Islamic past as a necessary component in the nation's path toward its great future, restoring it from oblivion. Her comparison between Islam Karimov and Mahatma Gandhi is an interesting example of the way Karimov – who was an apparatchik of the Uzbek Communist Party and who supported the conservative coup makers who threatened Gorbachev's reforms and sought to save the Soviet Union by keeping its government firmly entrenched in Moscow[36] – is, ironically, now often pictured as a hero in a quasi-mythological narrative of national liberation from a colonial past.

The more specific contours and contents of the Uzbek 'Muslimness' are in no way clearer and less ambiguous than the contours and contents of its alien 'Wahhabi' counterpart. The form of Islam which is promoted by the government in Uzbekistan – and indeed by all post-Soviet Central Asian governments – is formally based on the orthodox Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence (cf. Akiner 2003; Rasanayagam 2006b). In practice, however, the most diverse Islamic thinkers and mystics who have a connection with the present territory of Uzbekistan have been co-opted in the ideology of national independence as progenitors of official nationalist ideology, as if they were merely manifestations of a single spiritual thread running through history. As Andrew March has remarked, the list of co-opted spiritual ancestors includes figures and ideas that, if taken seriously, would undermine Karimov's form of secular nationalism (March 2002). Their teachings, however, are redefined in order to be compatible with contemporary government ideology.

An interesting feature of official discourses on Islam is the conspicuous absence of references to the *Jadid*[37] movement that arose in Central Asia around the turn of the twentieth century among a new cultural elite. The movement sought to undermine the influence of traditional religious elites and practices and to reconcile Islam with modernity, and as such was located in the realm of Muslim modernism, believing that modernity was fully congruent with the true essence of Islam. The *Jadid* reformers sought to transform the exclusively religious base of Muslim education by introducing secular subjects. Their efforts drew the opposition of the conservative *ulama*, often with the support of the Tsarist colonial authorities, who opposed change for their own reasons

(Critchlow 1991: 169–70; Khalid 1998).[38] According to Olivier Roy, a possible explanation for the absence of the *Jadid*s from present-day official discourses might be that they were not nationalists, but rather pan-Turkists or pan-Islamists: for them the term *milli* (national) did not refer to modern nation states, but to the whole community of Muslims in Russia (Roy 2000: 161–6). Roy is probably right in this observation, but I think that it should be added that the *Jadid*s do not play any significant role in popular imagination and practice of Islam and are therefore not particularly attractive in the attempt to promote a national ideology that is resonant with local lifeworlds. Furthermore, as more recent historical figures, they may be more difficult to manipulate ideologically than semi-mythical figures like the country's numerous *avliyo* (Muslim saints).

It is also hard to find nationalists among the representatives of the region's Sufi tradition, but nevertheless this tradition and the related more popular practices such as veneration of saints have played a persistent role in defining and promoting Uzbek 'Muslimness' – and indeed in government-sponsored Islam in all the Central Asian republics – after independence. This very important aspect of the co-option of Islam by the post-Soviet Central Asian governments will be treated in the next chapter.

Islam paranoia

Though officially depicted as directed against an external threat – or, more precisely, an alien element which has established itself within society – the crackdown on Islam which has characterized Uzbekistan since the early 1990s has influenced the lifeworlds of ordinary and law-abiding Muslims and created a sense of witch-hunt paranoia. In political as well as religious matters, any Muslim who challenges the status quo or who is critical of local customs and traditions risks being labelled a 'Wahhabi', as is any Muslim who publicly expresses religious sentiments, for example through the symbolism of the man's beard and the woman's veil. In Uzbekistan, as in other parts of the Islamic world, beards and veils have long been powerful symbols of religious affiliation and have been imbued with political significance (see also Chapter 4). In the relatively liberal political climate around independence, many women in Uzbekistan, especially the young, started to wear different variants of the veil. As the crackdown on Islam started and intensified, however, the public display of the veil came to be considered by representatives of the state as evidence of 'extremist' or 'Wahhabi' sentiments and became subject to restrictions: Article 14 in the 1998 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations states that citizens of Uzbekistan are not permitted to wear 'ritual' dress in public places, with the exception of those working in religious organizations. Article 184 in another law, the May 1998 Law on the Introduction of Amendments and Additions to Several Legislative Acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan, states that violators of the prohibition on ritual dress are to be fined five to ten times the minimum monthly wage or subject to administrative arrest for up to 15 days (Human Rights Watch 1999). Neither of these laws defines the type of

dress punishable under this legislation more specifically. Nonetheless, it has provided the legal justification for a range of cases in which university and primary school students and teachers have been expelled, suspended or forced to remove their religious clothing on threat of expulsion or arrest, and where their families have been harassed by officials and security agents, as has been documented in a Human Rights Watch report from 1999. These measures were supported by the official Islamic establishment. When students from Tashkent appealed to the *mufti* of Uzbekistan, Abdurashid Bahromov, he dismissed the students' religious practice as 'foreign' to Uzbekistan and anathema to the form of Islam embraced by the majority of the population (Human Rights Watch 1999). Without any clear definition of 'ritual' dress, the exact type of clothing prohibited by the legislation remains ambiguous and open to interpretation. According to the 1999 Human Rights Watch report, expelled female students generally wore solid-covered scarves fastened in the front, with a section covering their faces from the nose down. There were, however, also reports of students being expelled who wore scarves that left their faces uncovered.

Similarly, beards are often read as signs of religious radicalism and political opposition. Human rights organizations have reported how the police have stopped bearded men on the street and ordered them to shave under the threat of detainment, notably in the Ferghana Valley. The Human Rights Watch report referred to above also documents the expulsion, suspension, detention and coerced shaving of male university employees and students with beards. It, however, seems acceptable for elderly men to grow beards. That is, at some point it seems that the beard stops being a possible symptom of religious extremism and becomes merely sign of age. Similarly, as noted by Johan Rasanayagam, officially appointed *imam*s are able to express their Muslim belief in ways, such as for example through the growing of beards, which in other institutional and social contexts would render them vulnerable to being labelled as 'Wahhabi' (Rasanayagam 2006b).

The ambiguity surrounding the symbolism of the veil and the beard seem paradigmatic for an Uzbek society in which the population is exhorted to be alert and on the lookout for every sign of religious fanaticism and anti-state sentiments, but in which it is in no way clear which signs one is actually supposed to be on the lookout for, and where people have very different ideas about what counts as signs of fanaticism and anti-state sentiments. Even local government officials seem to approach the question of which signs to regard as indicators of religious extremism in a variety of ways, as they are not merely the mouthpieces and vehicles of government policy, but situated actors with personal idiosyncrasies working in local contexts governed by all sorts of concerns. All that people know is that they should be cautious. During my fieldwork women sometimes told me about how they had become more cautious with their headdress. A young woman told me that she had stopped wearing a headdress altogether: she would not even put on a scarf tied at the neck when visiting a shrine, although this is a very common practice, and although this type of headdress is usually considered congruent with Uzbek tradition. Another woman told me how she

had chosen to wear *hijab* only at home in order to accommodate her commitment to Islam with her loyalty to the government. This strategy marks a thought-provoking inversion of the place the *hijab* occupies in the public–private sphere distinction typical of many analyses of the Islamic world: here the *hijab*, which is usually interpreted as protecting the woman's private, inner self in public, becomes the expression of the private, inner self – paradoxically hidden through uncovering in public.

For Muslims in Uzbekistan it is not at all clear which ways of expressing piety are acceptable, and indeed highly valued, expressions of Uzbek 'Muslimness', and which are signs of 'Wahhabism'. As Johan Rasanayagam has argued, in the current atmosphere of fear and vulnerability the label 'Wahhabi' has come to represent any religious expression of which people are unsure (including, for example, religious expressions related to Christianity), which does not fit into the category of the clearly 'acceptable', the 'harmless' and which might make those associated with it a target for the state security services. Furthermore, the category of 'Wahhabi' can be instrumentalized within personal rivalries: parties in local rivalries can use the 'Wahhabi' label to discredit their opponents, whatever their actual beliefs or practice may be (Rasanayagam 2006b).

According to Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch 1999 and 2003), arrests of Muslims suspected of anti-state extremist sympathies increased dramatically after the government began to enlist *mahalla* leaders to collect information about residents' practices and beliefs and to pass it on to the police. Information on inhabitants' religious beliefs and practices are collated into lists of people who are considered potential Muslim extremists. The lists include information about who seems overly pious in their religious expression, who prays, who expresses dissatisfaction with the government, who has a beard or has previously had a beard, teaches children about Islam, has served prison sentences for religious extremism or is related to people who have served prison sentences for religious extremism. The Human Rights Watch report of 2003 concludes that *mahalla* committees in present-day Uzbekistan have become key government actors participating in repressing individuals and families whom the state deems suspect: a key institution for surveillance and control (Human Rights Watch 2003: 2–3). The findings from my fieldwork also indicate that the state's appropriation of this local network of solidarity, social security and social control has been an effective way to penetrate daily life more deeply, gaining access to those aspects of life which had previously escaped state control while appealing to popular tradition as a legitimizing strategy. If the private sphere had been considered more or less safe in Soviet times, a refuge where even Party officials could engage in religious activities that were otherwise likely to get them expelled, I experienced that even within this private sphere many Muslims were very cautious about how they practised their religion. Local authorities and *mahalla* residents enrolled as informants responsible for providing information about suspicious people often seemed to approach this question in very different ways and by reference to personal idiosyncrasies. Signs of 'Wahhabism' were found in the most diverse practices.

People in Uzbekistan never know what makes them suspect in the eyes of authorities or neighbours, and can never be sure that authorities or neighbours will not make use of the general paranoia surrounding Islam in order to blacken the names of those they wished to injure for one reason or another. All they know is that they are being watched closely. The situation might best be described as a combination of a 'panopticon' in Michel Foucault's sense (Foucault 1991), which makes people act as if they are being watched all the time, and a Kafka-like sense of lack of meaning and coherence in the ways people feel forced to act.

Everyday Islam

In the years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union Islam became a central political concern and a means used in a variety of political projects. The radical Islamist movements have had lots of attention in Western media and scholarly discourse, and so has the question of whether there is a risk that militant or radical Islam may gain a foothold among a population haunted by economic despair and suffering from its government's repression of the freedom of faith in the name of the war against terror. Most studies have confined themselves to the macro-level of government policies and religious movements (cf. Rasanayagam 2006c). The meaning of Islam in people's everyday lives has received less attention. This is a pity, as studies of how Islam is lived 'on the ground' might indeed make us much better equipped to answer such big questions as the question of the future prospects for radical Islam in the region. As Adeeb Khalid has remarked, 'Before we can speak of the political role of "Islam" in contemporary Uzbekistan, we have to comprehend what "Islam" means to the people of Uzbekistan' (Khalid 2003: 573). As will be shown in this book, the people I worked among in Bukhara tried to accommodate to the changing realities and were suspicious of the utopias preached by the radical Islamists. What they articulated in their search for the Divine was not an interest in an abstract orthodox world view 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.

As mentioned in the introduction, everyday Islam in Bukhara is centred around practices and beliefs related to Sufism and veneration of saints. As these practices and beliefs are not considered threatening by the Uzbek government, but rather as expressions of traditional Uzbek 'Muslimness', people are relatively free to engage in them, making them focal points for exploring and reflecting on what it means to be Muslim in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.[39]

In the next chapter an outline of the history of Sufism and veneration of saints in Central Asia will be given.

3 Sufism and the veneration of saints in Central Asia

On 28 July 1998, I made my first *ziyorat* (visit) to one of Bukhara's numerous shrines. This was also my first working day with my field assistant Baxtiyor, a young student of English philology at Bukhara State University. Together with Baxtiyor, I started visiting Bukhara's *avliyo* (saints) around a month after my first arrival in the city. Baxtiyor himself had paid *ziyorat* during most of his life, and with much success. Before his entrance examination to the university, for example, he had visited Bukhara's Seven *Pir*s[1] and was subsequently admitted with the best exam results in his year. And so he thought I was very clever to have planned fieldwork that would take me on a tour to the *avliyo* of Bukhara, because they would make sure that the work would not fail. I spent a couple of months seeking out *avliyo* with Baxtiyor: those he knew, those members of his family knew, and those we found thanks to the help of locals, notably taxi drivers, who showed impressive skills in navigating wreck-like Ladas and Volgas around remote corners of the city and its surroundings and tracking down sacred spots there.

On this particular day, we hailed a taxi and headed towards the village of Qashri Orifon and the shrine complex of Bahouddin Naqshband, around ten kilometres from Bukhara, past cotton fields, orchards and private homes, outside which entrepreneurially minded locals offered food, drinks and cigarettes to the wayfarers. Commenting on their small booths, Baxtiyor told me that it is a tradition for people from Bukhara to walk to the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine by foot, starting in the early morning, to avoid the harshest midday heat. Baxtiyor confessed, though, that the only time he had embarked on a *ziyorat* by foot to Qashri Orifon – or simply Bahouddin, as the place is also called – he had succumbed halfway to the temptation to take one of the steady flow of taxis and minibuses that testifies to the fact that Bahouddin Naqshband is by far Bukhara's most popular *avliyo*. Bahouddin Naqshband (1318–89), who lent his name to the Naqshbandiyya Sufi *tariqa* (way or order), and whose main activities were first connected with Bukhara, is the unofficial patron saint of the city (cf. also Algar 1990a: 11–12; Castagné 1951: 90; Schimmel 1975: 364). Whether religious or not, most Bukharans are able to recount one or several of the numerous legends about the life and miracles of their Bahouddin.

Stepping across the threshold to the courtyard where Bahouddin Naqshband's

tomb is situated was like stepping into another world: Baxtiyor started talking in a whisper and walking at a much slower pace. A concentrated silence filled the space, only broken by the prayers of the *domlo*[2] who was sitting next to the tomb. The *domlo* received the visitors in turn, reciting each time the *Fatiha*, the first *Sura* (chapter) of the Qur'an, followed by a *duo* (free prayer). The visitors would then hand him some money or some bread or sweets. Before or after the prayer, they would circle the tomb, some of them touching it, some of them mumbling a prayer, some of them crying. After a short while, Baxtiyor hinted that it was time for us to leave. We then withdrew to the less solemn, livelier social space in the adjacent courtyard, where children were running around feeding ducks and geese in a small pool, and where groups of visitors were sitting in the shade, enjoying a picnic. They all patiently answered my questions about their reasons for embarking on *ziyorat*. They were, however, much more interested in my story; who I was, where I came from and what I thought of the Uzbek people, their 'beautiful monuments' (i.e. the shrine complex) and their 'national ancestors' (i.e. Bahouddin Naqshband and other *avliyo*). On meeting me, they were suddenly not so much pilgrims or visitors as they were hosts in their homeland, eager to make sure that this homeland was presented in an appropriate way. Rather than answering my questions about the place and its significance for themselves, therefore, they persistently referred me to the museum of the Naqshbandi *tariqa*, because I would find all the information I needed there. So Baxtiyor and I went to the museum, a small place connected to the shrine complex. An attendant showed us around the history of the Naqshbandiyya, which ended in a section devoted to the celebrations of Bahouddin Naqshband and the inauguration of the newly restored shrine complex in 1993. Photos pictured the place before and after the restoration work, and showed President Karimov cutting the red ribbon to the shrine, an action that situated him symbolically as the author of a story written in the landscape about the revival of Islam in post-independent Uzbekistan and which connected this revival of Islam with his own nationalist agenda – an action that made the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine into a shrine of the nation and the regime.

Sufism and the veneration of saints in Central Asia

Co-opting sacred places associated with *avliyo* into its nation-building project, the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan has co-opted focal points for everyday Islam.

Avliyo exist throughout the Muslim world. Among them one finds the most diverse characters:

> wild and irascible like the *'ajami* saints of whom the Egyptians are afraid; saints whose words makes trees dry up and people die; and others who radiate kindness and beauty, harmony and sweetness, and can take upon them the burden – illness or grief – of others.
>
> (Schimmel 1994: 193)

Belief in, and veneration of, Allah's *avliyo* as the Prophet's spiritual successors – persons who, by the grace of God and because of their exemplary lives, hold a special relationship with God and possess *baraka* (blessing power) – has often been identified as the most important aspect of popular Islam in Central Asia (cf. Arabov 2004; Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 94; Fathi 1997; Lipovsky 1996; Poliakov 1992; Privratsky 2001; Schubel 1999). As Robert McChesney has noted, other religious sites – mosques for example – do not seem to have the same hold on the imagination as have the shrines of *avliyo*, whose importance lies in their being thresholds or doorways to the spiritual world and to what lies beyond human experience (McChesney 1996: 19).

When asked, many people in Central Asia seem not to know much about Sufism as an abstract doctrine (cf. also Privratsky 2001: 16; Arabov 2004: 345). Sufism, however, has in fact had a deep influence on popular Islam in the region, as evidenced by the popularity of the related practices of veneration of saints and the significance of what one might term everyday esotericism or mysticism, i.e. the importance of esoteric experiences – dreams, revelations, feelings and impulses perceived to be of divine origin – in everyday life.[3] It is a general feature of Sufi saints – as revealed in hagiographic narratives – that their life is motivated by the guidance of divinely inspired dreams and visions (cf. Werbner 2003: 61). In Central Asia the life stories of ordinary people are also often replete with divinely inspired dreams and visions which invest these lives, if not with saintly charisma, then with some kind of divine blessedness.

Tasawwuf, or Sufism, designates the 'mystical' dimension of Islam. Sufism developed out of an ascetic trend in early Islam that emphasized detachment from the material world. A devotional aspect was later added which made the love of God characteristic of Sufism, the desire to overcome the gulf between human experience and the Divine: to have direct experience of God[4] (Esposito 1998: 100–2; Schimmel 1975; Trimmingham 1971). In the twelfth century, Sufism began a process towards institutionalization into more formally organized religious *tariqa*s (ways or orders) based on the principle of the relationship between the *murid* (disciple or aspirant) and *murshid*, *shaykh* or *pir* (master, guide). It became the *murshid*'s task to guide the *murid* through the stages of mystical experience along the path on the basis of his own experience, helping the *murid* dispersing the veils which hide the self from God, thus achieving mystical union with God (cf. Schimmel 1975; Trimmingham 1971). Although Sufism may not be entirely coincident with the more popular practice of veneration of saints, and although the 'magical' ritual practices taking place at saints' tombs may seem remote from Sufism as an abstract philosophical system, Sufism and the veneration of saints are related: during the early centuries of Sufism the concept of *wilaya* (saintship) developed on the basis of the relation to the *murshid*, and theories about a whole hierarchy of saints – those who had indeed achieved mystical union in God – were developed (Schimmel 1975: 199–200; Trimmingham 1971: 13). It has been noted that there is a fundamental difference between the way the genuine Sufi and people in general approach a saint's tomb or some other place associated with a saint. As J. Spencer Trimmingham wrote,

> The mystic carries out a *ziyara* for the purpose of *muraqaba* (spiritual communion) with the saint, finding in the material symbol an aid to meditation. But the popular belief is that the saint's soul lingers about his tomb and places (*maqams*) specially associated with him whilst he was on earth or at which he had manifested himself. At such places his intercession can be sought.
>
> (Trimmingham 1971: 26)

However, in Uzbekistan the difference is not so clear-cut: most people, Sufis and others, are ambiguous about whether shrines are merely symbols or traces of divine presence in the world and the ideals attained by the saint, or whether they embody the divine in its essence concretely, and are thus endowed with some kind of contagious blessedness (see Chapter 5; cf. also Werbner 2003: 11).

Sufis have frequently stood in a strained relationship with the *ulama*. Sufis have often been considered heretics because of their belief that it is possible to have direct communion with God and because of the related practices of veneration of saints which have often been condemned as *shirk* (idolatry). In Central Asia there has been a tendency to regard the practice of veneration of saints as a remnant of pre-Islamic, shamanistic religion, whereas in Southeast Asia, for example, veneration of saints has been condemned by Islamic reformers as an idolatrous innovation replete with 'Hindu' customs (cf. Werbner 2003: 8). The extreme practices of some of the Sufi orders – trance, self-mutilation and the use of drugs – have also been a reason for considering Sufis as heretics.[5] Sufis, furthermore, have been considered threatening to the power of the *ulama* because they have claimed a kind of knowledge of *al-Haqq* (the Real, i.e. God) that cannot be gained through revealed, codified religion (Trimmingham 1971: 1). Nonetheless, all around the Muslim world Sufis have been great missionaries of Islam and a key to the spread of the religion, their practices being frequently accommodating towards, and able to incorporate, pre-existing local beliefs and practices (Eickelman 1998: 278–9; Esposito 1998: 101; Schimmel 1975: 346; Werbner 2003: 4–5). Central Asia is no exception to this general trend. Also here Sufis have played a major role in converting Central Asia's population to Islam, particularly in the nomadic regions where they were much more influential than the official Islamic establishment (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 31; Foltz 1999: 97; Trimmingham 1971: 58; Zelkina 2000: 81, note 42).[6]

Some of the world's larger Sufi orders originate in Central Asia: the Kubrawiyya and the Yasaviyya in the twelfth century and the Naqshbandiyya in the fourteenth century. Qadiriyya, which was brought to the region from Baghdad in the twelfth century, is also still active in the region. The Naqshbandiyya in particular has played a very important role in the region throughout history. The Naqshbandiyya is the main Sufi order in Bukhara, and its teachings as well as sacred places associated with it have played a large role in the post-Soviet Uzbek government's nation-building project.

Naqshbandiyya

Naqshbandiyya is one of the world's most widespread Sufi orders, with branches spread around large parts of the Muslim world. It is known for its sobriety in devotional practice – in contrast with other Sufi orders which have developed more ecstatic forms of worship. Aspects of Naqshbandiyya's teaching have been brought forward by the post-Soviet government as examples of a local Uzbek 'Muslimness' which does not mix up religion and politics (see below). This is quite ironic as Naqshbandiyya through history has been distinguished by its strong involvement in worldly affairs – including political affairs (Algar 1990b; Zarcone 1996: 64; Zelkina 2000: 81). Leading Naqshbandis were patronized by most major post-medieval rulers, served as their spiritual and political advisers and drew legitimacy to their rule. One of the greatest Naqshbandi *shaykh*s, Xoja Ahror (1404–90), cultivated a relationship with the ruling classes with the intention of serving the world through the exercise of political power and had a major influence over the rulers of his time (Trimmingham 1971: 94). He established the Naqshbandi *tariqa* as most influential in Central Asia, and his disciples started what was to become its dissemination in most Muslim regions of the world, making it one of the world's most widespread Sufi orders. From his time, political involvement became a frequent feature of the history of the Naqshbandiyya. In Central Asia the close relationship between Naqshbandiyya and the ruling classes continued through the Shaybanid, Ashtarkhanid and Manghit dynasties, right down to the last Bukharan emir, Sayid Olimxon, who was said to be disciple of a Naqshbandi *shaykh* (Algar 1990a: 16; Algar 1990b: 126–7; Levin 1996: 106; Rashid 2002; Schubel 1999; Zelkina 2000: 81–3). Furthermore, Naqshbandiyya has provided organization and leadership for many conflicts, including the holy wars against Russian colonists in North Caucasus in 1830–59, against Russians and Soviets in part of Turkestan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as rebellions against Chinese rule in Xinjiang (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 3; Manz 1987; Olcott 1995: 35; Voll 1994: 65; Zarcone 1996; Zelkina 2000).

The Naqshbandiyya order's political involvement has sometimes been connected with one of the basic principles of the order,[7] *xilvat dar anjuman* (solitude in the crowd), which means the principle of combining worldly and spiritual activities, of being inwardly concentrated on God while outwardly immersed in the transactions and relationships that sustain Muslim society (cf. Algar 1990b: 152; Zelkina 2000: 82–3). However, as Hamid Algar has pointed out, it is important to note that this principle is open to many interpretations and should not always be taken to imply the necessity of political activity. Basically, the principle merely argues against the withdrawal from the world that is sometimes thought to characterize Sufism as such (Algar 1990b: 152). As will be shown in Chapter 6, Naqshbandis in present-day Bukhara tend to interpret *xilvat dar anjuman* as a principle that points to the importance of accommodating to society.

In the Soviet period the Sufi orders became prime targets of the campaigns against Islam. They were seen as clandestine anti-Soviet organizations made up

by Muslim fanatics (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985). In fact, they were pictured not unlike the way the 'Wahhabis' are pictured today: as inherently extremist and militant. Writers have disagreed about the fate of Naqshbandiyya during Soviet rule. Sovietologists Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush argued that the Central Asian Sufi orders simply went underground (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985). Professor of religious studies Vernon Schubel, in a more recent assessment of the reconstruction of the Naqshbandi tradition in contemporary Uzbekistan (Schubel 1999), argues against this view, claiming that the once thriving Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* system was nearly completely rooted out: the classical institution of *pir–murid* – the relationship between Sufi master and disciple – was utterly destroyed and, according to his informants, unlikely to be revived (ibid.: 74). According to Schubel, while the banned 'Wahhabism' or 'fundamentalism' has gone underground where it is passed on orally from teacher to student, Sufism – divorced from the institution of *pir–murid* – has taken on a new life as a largely literary, intellectual tradition (ibid.: 85). Thierry Zarcone, an expert in the history of Sufism in the Turkish world who did research on Sufism in Central Asia in the years immediately after independence (Zarcone 1996) has argued the opposite. Although the Naqshbandiyya is in a bad state in Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent – its charismatic leaders having disappeared – a revival of the *tariqa* is taking place there thanks to the support of Naqshbandi leaders from Tajikistan, Turkey and the Ferghana Valley (ibid.: 71–2).

Part of the confusion might stem from the fact that it is quite difficult to do research on Naqshbandiyya in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Not only is Naqshbandiyya a highly decentralized order, consisting of a conglomerate of loosely associated groups (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 8; Özdalga 1999; Roy 2000: 147), the Bukhara Naqshbandis – of my acquaintance, at least – were also very conscious about not drawing special attention to themselves, avoiding any overt missionary activity toward their fellow human beings. When my field assistants or I asked them for an interview many of them were surprised that we knew they were Naqshbandis.[8] It was not that they kept their engagement in the *tariqa* secret – most of them granted my request for an interview and were actually more open about the *tariqa* and their engagement in it than I had expected. They were just careful not to make a show of it, both because they believed that any kind of showing-off was fundamentally incongruent with Naqshbandiyya's teaching, and because they were acutely aware that people who express their faith too overtly (not to mention proselytizing) are in danger of being accused of religious extremism and of attempting to undermine the secular state – notwithstanding the fact that aspects of the Naqshbandiyya teaching have been brought forward in post-Soviet official discourses as proper national and semi-secular 'Muslimness'.

My research suggests that Naqshbandiyya in Bukhara was severely reduced during the Soviet period but not destroyed. In addition, it has been gradually re-emerging as a network of an increasing number of followers since independence, with the *pir–murid* relation still as its essential core. In this process it has

been aided by adepts from abroad, notably Turkey, who came to Central Asia to reintroduce Sufism in the years following independence (cf. Akiner 2003: 109). The Naqshbandis with whom I got acquainted during my fieldwork had all joined the Naqshbandiyya just before or in the years after independence. They came from various backgrounds, but the majority seemed to belong to the middle class: scholars, students, intellectuals, teachers, craftsmen and businessmen. According to professor of philosophy at Bukhara's technical university Gulchehra Navro'zova, who apart from being Naqshbandi herself has also researched Sufism, around 500 men and women joined the Naqshbandiyya in Bukhara alone from independence in 1991 to 2000. Both men and women were involved[9] – contrary to what Bennigsen and Wimbush wrote in their 1985 work on Sufism in the Soviet Union (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985), where they observed that Central Asian Naqshbandis seem reluctant to open their brotherhood to women.[10] This fact is also contrary to what Thierry Zarcone (Zarcone 2000a) observed in a later, post-independence work, in which he claimed that in Central Asia women are not present at Naqshbandi ceremonies and *zikr* seances, and that in the very rare case that women are accepted in the Naqshbandiyya, their practice takes place under the control of men (ibid.: 159).[11] It also contradicts Habiba Fathi's (Fathi 1997) claim in an article about female mullahs in Central Asia that women Sufis have disappeared (ibid.: 32). In the networks I became acquainted with both men and women were accepted, although they tended to hold their *xatms* (gatherings) separately.

The Naqshbandis generally enjoy great respect in their local communities.[12] A couple of the Naqshbandis with whom I spoke during my fieldwork had been elected into their local *mahalla* committee (cf. Chapter 4). Others were often consulted in various matters – religious or worldly – by their relatives, neighbours, colleagues or classmates, although they were careful to keep a low profile in order not to be suspected of religious extremism, of mixing religion and politics.

I will return to the present-day Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* in Chapter 6, where I will focus more specifically on how Naqshbandis in Bukhara perceive their engagement in the Naqshbandiyya and how they reinterpret its teachings to make it relevant to present-day concerns.

Sufism and 'Muslimness' in Uzbekistan

An important aspect of the revival of the Sufi tradition in Uzbekistan has been the way it has been co-opted in the government's nation-building project as an example of proper Uzbek 'Muslimness'. In an ironic contrast to the way it was pictured in Soviet research and propaganda, aspects of the Sufi tradition are now pictured as expressions of a kind of Islam which has developed in harmony with local conditions and with the Uzbek national character, a kind of Islam which is a bearer of the nation's humanist traditions and which, moreover, is compatible with a modern, secular state as a home-grown counterweight to political Islam (see also Atkin 2000: 124; Hanks 1999: 169; Paul 2002; Roy 2000: 159;

Schubel 1999). In the official discourses of the post-Soviet Uzbek government, special attention has been given to aspects of Naqshbandiyya's teaching in a 'bricolage'-like embrace of aspects of local tradition which are interpreted as fitting into present-day government ideology, and which also have resonance in popular religious experience. The Naqshbandiyya teaching is open to rather divergent interpretations.[13] In post-Soviet Uzbekistan the highly emotional discourse and symbolism characteristic both of the Naqshbandiyya (see Chapter 6) and more popular conceptions of Islam centred around the fight between the forces of good and evil in the human heart have been endowed with powerful contemporary political meaning: the emotional discourse and symbolism is used to claim both the spiritual continuity of the nation, which remained essentially intact albeit partially forgotten in spite of the 70 Soviet years, and to define a proper understanding of religion as internalized faith that does not interfere with politics.

One aspect of the revival of the Sufi tradition in Uzbekistan is the appearance of numerous books, pamphlets, newspaper articles and television and radio broadcasts on the lives and teachings of Central Asia's *avliyo* (Schubel 1999). In an analysis of hagiographic literature from post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Jürgen Paul has demonstrated how central saintly figures in this literature have been invested with qualities which are in demand – that is, promoted by the government – at the present political juncture: 'Serve society, work honestly, do not stick your head out, listen to what your "ancestors" say, do not aspire to self-fulfilment if this means a really individual effort' (Paul 2002: 637); values which are interpreted as 'national' rather than 'Muslim' (ibid.).

As mentioned, Naqshbandiyya is known for its sobriety in religious practice. This sobriety is expressed in the order's preference for the silent, unspoken *zikr*. *Zikr* is the term for the recollection of God which is characteristic of Sufi worship. This recollection of God can assume many forms which are typically passed on from *shaykh* to disciple. The unspoken *zikr – xufiyya zikr* or *zikr qalbi* – which is characteristic of Naqshbandiyya is done in or with the heart and can ideally be done at any place and at any time without drawing attention from one's surroundings. In present-day Uzbekistan, the priority given to the silent *zikr* is popularly interpreted as a call for adaptation to society, for limiting religion to the private sphere and for not mixing up religion and politics. The same interpretation is given to the saying *Dil ba yoru, dast ba kor* (The heart with God,[14] the hand at work) which is ascribed to Bahouddin Naqshband and can now be seen on billboards around Bukhara calling people to engage in efforts to make Uzbekistan a great nation while keeping God in their hearts. Aspects of the Naqshbandiyya teaching, in other words, are used to validate a secular conception of the state, as if Uzbekistan's Islamic heritage contained the seeds of secularism within itself.

Such co-optation of Sufism in nation building is also seen in the other Central Asian states (Arabov 2004; Zarcone 1996), notably in Kazakhstan, which has seen a rehabilitation of Ahmad Yasavi (1103–66) and the Yasaviyya Sufi order named after him. As Thierry Zarcone has demonstrated, in post-Soviet

Kazakhstan the writings of Ahmad Yasavi are interpreted so as to make him into a model of the perfect modern Central Asian citizen. His mysticism and tendencies to world denial have been played down and instead he is interpreted as a advocate of secular, tolerant, humanistic and nationalist ideas (Zarcone 2000b).

Sacred places

The co-optation of sacred places – the restoration and patronization of shrines and the nationwide celebrations of the saints and scholars – is perhaps the most important aspect of the Central Asian governments' co-optation of the Sufi tradition in their nation-building projects. In Kazakhstan the rehabilitation of Ahmad Yasavi was marked by the restoration of the Ahmad Yasavi shrine complex in the city of Turkistan, which was built in the fourteenth century by Amir Timur. It was declared that 1993 would be the year of Ahmad Yasavi, and since 1990 several conferences dedicated to the literary and religious legacy of Yasavi have been held (Zarcone 1996: 73). In Turkmenistan pilgrimages to sacred places are a rare case of religious practice which is not strictly controlled by the government, and the government even seems to encourage it by providing free accommodation for pilgrims (ICG 2003c: 31). In Uzbekistan the patronization of shrines has been one of President Karimov's most common reference points for the argument that his government has worked for the rehabilitation of the nation's Islamic tradition. In this section, I will treat this material aspect of the co-option of the Sufi tradition.

There is good reason for this co-optation of sacred places. As mentioned, veneration of saints is the most important aspect of popular Islam in the region. Sacred places were also important in pre-Islamic Central Asia, and it has often been pointed out that some Muslim sacred places were venerated before the advent of Islam. The belief that sacred places embody the divine and are thus endowed with some kind of contagious blessedness has been rejected and condemned as *shirk*, idolatry, by orthodox Muslims, but is nevertheless widespread among Muslim believers all around the world. There are of course local variations to the significance given to shrines around the Muslim world. However, part of an answer to the question of why places are so important in popular religion may be that places – being doorways to what lies beyond human experience – are important sites for meaning and reflection.

Places gather, as the philosopher Steven Casey has observed in a phenomenological account of place (Casey 1996). Places gather not only 'things', understood as various animate and inanimate entities, but also experiences and histories, language, thoughts and memories. When visiting particular places, people experience these places as holding memories for them, releasing or evoking these memories in their presence (ibid.: 24–5). People thus often experience places as inherently meaningful. Places, however, only express what their animators enable them to say. Places are natural 'reflectors' that return awareness to the source from which it springs (Basso 1996: 56). As Keith Basso (1996) has noted, space acquires meaning through the multiple lived relation-

ships that people maintain with places, through their 'dwelling'.[15] Relationships with places are lived whenever a place becomes the object of awareness, and notably when individuals step back from the flow of everyday experience and attend self-consciously to places. Doing so, they may also dwell on aspects of themselves – who they presently are, who they used to be, and who they might become. The physical landscape becomes actively wedded to the landscape of the mind.

Relationships to places, however, are not solely lived in contemplative moments of social isolation. Representations of place are commonly made available for public consumption; relationships to places are lived most often in the company of other people (ibid.: 54–6). A relatively fixed, though never completely stable, array of collective representations develops around some places. In other words, these places become the places of social memory. This is the case, for example, for many shrines in Bukhara, whose very 'placeness' is indicated, and partially constituted, by the hagiographic complexes, nationalist discourses and miracle narratives connected with them, the ritual practices carried out there, and the subtle changes in the comportment of people who visit them. These hagiographic complexes, nationalist discourses, miracle narratives, ritual practices and special forms of comportment direct people's awareness toward these places. They encourage people to dwell there, to reflect on themselves by way of the 'things', histories and memories gathered there.

The politics of sacred space

Every landscape tells, or rather is, a story, as Tim Ingold (1993) has noted. 'It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation' (ibid.: 152). People, as Ingold points out, learn to read the story of the landscape through an education of attention as they travel through it with their mentors who point specific features out to them. Other things they discover for themselves, by watching, listening and feeling (ibid.: 153).

The ways people have been instructed in reading the story of the sacred landscape of Bukhara have, among other things, been influenced by the significance shifting rulers and governments have given the shrines; in other words, by the ways they have emplotted them. The patronization of larger and better-known shrines has a long history in the area. Here, I shall mainly focus on the shrine complex of Bahouddin Naqshband,[16] who, as already mentioned, is by far Bukhara's most popular saint.

When Bahouddin Naqshband died, he was buried in his birthplace, Qashri Orifon. In the mid-fifteenth century, as Naqshbandiyya gained increasing political, economical and spiritual influence in Central Asia, Bahouddin Naqshband was made the patron saint of Bukhara. His shrine became one of the most important places of pilgrimage in Central Asia, and a large complex of mosque, *khanaqah* (Sufi centre, residence) and *madrasa* grew up around the tomb, endowed with land and other property by successive rulers of Bukhara (Algar

1990a: 11; McChesney 1996; Schimmel 1975; Trimingham 1971: 63–4). According to historian Robert McChesney (1996), there is evidence[17] that the shrine was particularly important in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a place where rulers, politicians and other dignitaries would stop and pay their respects when visiting Bukhara or before embarking on some affair outside the region, as a place for holding *majlises* (large meetings) presided over by the ruling khan, and as a place of burial for the rulers of Bukhara (ibid.: 94–6). Also the later emirs of Bukhara, according to historian Joseph Castagné (1951), would receive the blessing of the Naqshbandi *shaykh*s on the day of their inauguration, and frequently thereafter make *ziyorat* to the shrine (ibid.: 91).

Desacralizing sacred space

After the Bolshevik revolution, the lands attached to the shrine were confiscated, all organized devotional activity came to halt, and the complex began to decay (Algar 1990a: 12; McChesney 1996: 97). From that time, but particularly since the late 1950s, shrines and shrine pilgrimage – believed to be controlled by the Sufis and thus to be hotbeds of fanaticism and radicalism – became main targets for Soviet anti-Islamic measures and propaganda (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 42; Subtelny 1989). The official Soviet Muslim Spiritual Administration of Central Asia and Kazakhstan sharply dissociated itself from saint worship and shrine pilgrimage and other practices that could not be legitimized by the appeal to scriptural sources. Beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the 1980s, the Board issued several *fatwa*s (legal decisions) against such practices, condemning them as *bid'a* (heretical innovations in belief and practice) (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 42; Saroyan 1997: 48–50, 66–8, 113; Subtelny 1989: 595). As mentioned in the introduction, Soviet scholars in the field also sought to 'unmask' the pre-Islamic character of veneration of saints. That is, they sought to depict it as an ancient survival from the past which incorporates elements of pre-Islamic shamanistic and Zoroastrianist practice and which has only a dubious link with Islam. And on their account, it was a practice engaged in mainly by ignorant women from the countryside (cf. also Tett 1994: 129; Tyson 1997).

As David Tyson points out (1997), perhaps the deepest and most lasting effect of the campaigns against shrines and shrine pilgrimage was the eradication of the shrines as local and regional intellectual centres of teaching, discussion and discourse.[18] In particular, the Soviets were fairly successful in eliminating individuals whom pilgrims sought out and persecuting those who played an important role in the physical maintenance of the shrines and in the preservation and transmission of any formal intellectual tradition that may have existed at the shrines (ibid.). As for the shrines themselves, most were – like other buildings with religious connotation – destroyed or left to decay, whereas a much subtler strategy was played out towards others – notably the main shrine centres. Some of these were actually preserved as monuments, museums or tourist attractions.

In 1918 Lenin signed a decree requiring the classification and conservation of artistic and historical monuments (Azzout 1999: 163–4). Shrines in Soviet Central Asia which represented significant medieval architectural structures were redefined as monuments of Central Asian architecture expressing an earlier stage in the development of the culture of the proletariat (Azzout 1999; Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 95; McChesney 1996: 73; Subtelny 1989: 597).[19] They were subjected to what Benedict Anderson (1991) in a discussion of nineteenth-century colonial South Asia has aptly termed a 'museumizing imagination': an imagination which turns ancient shrines into important institutions of modern state power. Through archaeology, the museumizing imagination incorporates old sacred sites into the map of the state, thereby draping their ancient prestige around the mappers (ibid.: 183). The museumizing imagination in colonial South Asia which Anderson discusses desacralized the sacred sites. They were as far as possible to be held empty of pilgrims and filled with tourists instead. 'Museumized this way, they were repositioned as regalia for a *secular* colonial state' (ibid.). Their new secular nature was underscored by their infinite reproducibility in illustrated books, postcards, etc., which was made possible by the new technologies of print-capitalism and photography (ibid.). In Soviet Uzbekistan the meaning of ancient shrines was similarly officially redefined, subjugated to a Soviet-modernistic framework. The social dramas that used to unfold at these places – places where human suffering and hope met the power of the divine to change the course of lives – were bracketed, relegated to a place far back in history, before Soviet modernizing forces had eliminated religion as a form of social consciousness and made way for a rationalist, secular outlook. This place far back in history was made a 'foreign country',[20] the relics of which were irrelevant to modern concerns. For example an old plaque in Russian at the shrine of Sayfiddin Buxoriy still read *Pamyatnik arkhitekturi* (Architectural monument) when I was in Bukhara in 2000. The plaque indicated how this place should be 'read' – that the place only had meaning in the context of a story about the development of architecture that culminated in the triumph of Soviet modernism. In books, postcards and other popular official representations, shrines were represented in ordered series, as ancestors of the modern state. A late Soviet series of postcards with motifs from Bukhara which was still *the* postcard series sold in Bukhara in the late 1990s thus included both examples of Soviet modernism (blocks of flats, office buildings, and the building of the Regional Committee of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic), and mosques and *madrasa*s of the past.

In the 1960s in the Soviet Union the term 'ancient heritage' came into use to denote entire towns which were considered of importance (Azzout 1999). In 1965 the Uzbekistan Ministry of Culture made a plan for Bukhara's old town centre, which called for the construction of a main road that would group the historic buildings along a single street. The tourist would then be able to see the historic and architectural monuments easily. Preservation, indeed, went hand-in-hand with tourism. In a later plan from 1977, entire chapters were dedicated to organizing tourism. The main objective was to give the tourist the impression of

travelling through time by creating an atmosphere of past ages along preselected boulevards. Restoration work was stepped up during anniversaries or other celebrations. In 1980 UNESCO thus sponsored a jubilee in honour of history's 1,000 most famous scholars among whom Ibn Sina was included. For the occasion, 40 buildings and mausoleums were restored in the old centre of Bukhara. Another group of buildings was restored in 1983 for the 1,200th anniversary of Muhammad ibn Musa al-Xorazm, a mathematician and astronomer from Khiva (ibid.: 167–8).

Ziyorat in secular space

In spite of the fact that shrines and shrine pilgrimage were primary targets for Soviet anti-Islamic measures and propaganda for a long period, shrines – museumized or not – remained focal points for popular Islam in Uzbekistan during the whole Soviet era, as in Central Asia in general (cf. also Atkin 1989: 18, 25; Schubel 1999; Tyson 1997). Although a 'foreign country' in official ideology, many people apparently found the past embodied in the shrines very relevant to modern concerns. Almost all practitioners of *ziyorat* that I talked with during my fieldwork had paid *ziyorat* in Soviet times too, usually having been brought to the shrines by parents, grandparents or other relatives in the first place, and then later imitating their practice: *Qo'sh uyasida ko'rganini qiladi* (The bird does what it has seen in the nest) as one of them said. This proverb emphasizes what most of the people I discussed *ziyorat* in Soviet times with emphasized: that their upbringing in their family had far more influence on them than their upbringing in the Soviet educational system, not least as regards their practice of Islam. They paid *ziyorat* despite the background of stories about relatives, neighbours, colleagues, friends and other people who had been kicked out of the Party, who had been fired from their jobs or expelled from school or university, or who had been forced to renounce their religious beliefs at local Party meetings. But as they explained their courage, when people had faith, faith and the benefits of visitation would overshadow any fear of potential sanctions. In fact, many of them emphasized that paying *ziyorat* was something they could not help doing, and if they wanted to do *ziyorat* they would find a way: they would go to the shrines and couch their activities in such accepted secular terms as 'tourism' or 'studies in ancient architecture', contesting the authorities' monopoly on truth by investing conventional categories with alternative meanings (and joking with each other about how this and that person had suddenly begun to display an interest in architecture or had shown up as a tourist in his or her own city). They would go in disguise, or they would go at night, under the cover of darkness, hidden from the eyes and ears of people they feared, and people they did not know. They would go to places they knew were sacred even though everything possible had been done to disguise this fact. They would go in their dreams, and they would go to places that experience had taught them were relatively safe, where they knew that local officials turned a blind eye to such practices, or where local officials themselves secretly engaged in them. The

enforcement of anti-religious policy was not uniform because it hinged on a number of local factors, including the low-level district officials responsible for implementing policies. Such low-level officials were not just mouthpieces of the regime. They had usually been born and raised in the community which they served, and many sought to make compromises between Soviet policy and their own tasks of implementing it and local sensibilities (cf. also Roy 2000: 152; Tyson 1997). With their silent acceptance, the practice of *ziyorat* became a public secret. That is, it was predicated on a kind of mutual deception or dissimulation which was intended to keep the peace and maintain a sense of community. People would also pay *ziyorat* to shrines that were officially *zakret* (closed),[21] or converted to secular use. For example, an elderly woman called Hadicha told me how her parents used to bring her with them on *ziyorat*, looking at the shrine through peepholes in the walls that were built around it, and how they would sometimes hold a *xudoiy* (sacrifice) by bringing a sheep to one of the houses next to the shrine, having it slaughtered there and distributing the meat to the four or five houses around it. In short, if one is to believe these accounts of the past, things were difficult, but people had a sense of the 'game' – where and with whom it was safe to play it, and which codes to use when doing so.

'Monuments that obtained their originality'

The late Gorbachev years and the years after independence gave new significance to Bukhara's shrines, and not least to the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine, which became a primary focus for a state-sponsored effort to recast earlier representations of collective experience in order to support and validate present patterns of authority. State funds were appropriated for a much-needed renovation, thus continuing the long history of political patronage that began with the ruling khans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which had continued with the emirs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (McChesney 1996: 84, 97; Olcott 1995: 26). In 1989 the mosque was officially reopened (Zarcone 1996: 72). In 1993 Bahouddin Naqshband's 675th birthday was celebrated with the inauguration of his newly-restored shrine complex, an inauguration closely followed by the state media and in which several notable figures participated, including the *mufti* Hajji Muxtar Abdullaev, President Karimov and numerous Sufi *shaykh*s from all over the Muslim world. An international conference on Bahouddin Naqshband, Naqshbandiyya and Sufism in general was also held where scholars discussed the relevance of Naqshbandiyya's teachings for present-day Uzbekistan. As Annemarie Schimmel who participated in the conference recalls,

> The Central Asian scholars rightly considered the emphasis that the Naqshbandiyya put on silent remembrance of God and on the practice of *khalwat dar anjuman* suitable for modern life. To turn one's heart in full concentration to the Divine Beloved while working in this world for the improvement of society seemed to them an attitude that could help them master the

> different and difficult tasks that modern people face. Therefore, almost every speaker dwelled upon the adage *dast be-kar, dil be-yar* – 'The hand at work, the heart with a Friend' – a saying that is written in various calligraphic styles around the walls of the library where our meeting took place.
>
> (Schimmel 1998: ix)

Souvenirs were produced to commemorate the event – several of the people I knew in Bukhara, for example, had bought a Bahouddin Naqshband watch on the occasion. Billboards featuring the sayings of central Naqshbandi *avliyo* were erected. Bukhara's main street, once named after Vladimir Lenin, was renamed after Bahouddin Naqshband. There was a boom in newspaper articles and academic and popular books and pamphlets on the Naqshbandi tradition in Central Asia,[22] and Bahouddin Naqshband's mystical poetry was translated from Persian into Uzbek. Academic research on Sufism was encouraged. A cultural foundation was created in Bukhara to promote the Naqshbandiyya, providing information to the media, maintaining connections with Naqshbandiyya centres in other countries and exchanging scholarly materials on the Naqshbandiyya (Levin 1996). And a Naqshbandiyya research centre was opened at the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine complex. When I talked with the director there in 2000, he unambiguously connected the revival of the Naqshbandi tradition with the Karimov government:

> In the Soviet period we lived under the name of one people, the Soviet people. We lived with huge promises, but we lost the essence of man. But now our eyes have been opened. All the great spirits of the nation, those fostered by this earth – Islam Karimov has made them known since independence, has given them back to us, opened the way for religion. And he shows Islam respect, the religion of our ancestors [. . .] In order to preserve our customs, our traditions, our ceremonies, our national pride, our spiritual purity the most important mean is Islam, says the president. Today we have . . . our president has celebrated all the masters. In 1993 there was Bahouddin Naqshband's 675th jubilee. Imom al-Buxoriy was celebrated greatly. After that Imom al-Moturidiy's jubilee was celebrated, Ahmad al-Farg'oniy's jubilee was celebrated. Why does the state celebrate all these jubilees? That is to teach us the conviction, the faith, the devotion, the heritage that we have from our ancestors and to answer the questions of our youth. The purpose is to keep the nation pure. An ideology is necessary. And this ideology, in order to create this ideology Islam is necessary; our heritage, the heritage from our ancestors. And the teaching of Naqshbandiyya is very important here.

In addition to Bahouddin Naqshband numerous central Muslim *avliyo* connected with the area that is now Uzbekistan have been rehabilitated and celebrated after independence, their shrines restored and inaugurated anew with state funding. Until recently, on the homepage of the information agency *Jahon*

(World) under the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs a list could be found of shrines, mosques and *madrasa*s which were restored during the period from 1991 to 2001. *Monuments that obtained their originality*, they were termed here. These immediately visible material improvements to some of the larger and better-known shrines in the country, and the nationwide celebrations of the Muslim saints and scholars connected with them, have constituted one of the most common reference points for President Karimov when he has argued that his government has worked for the rehabilitation of the nation's Islamic tradition. These efforts to restore ancient religious buildings are presented as something new, something characteristic for the post-independence period as opposed to the Soviet period. However, these efforts are not fundamentally different from the efforts of the Soviet era to 'museumize' Islam. The shrines are still termed *obidalar* (monuments): rather than being icons of the sacred in its universal, transcendental sense, they are now chronotropes, that is, tropes which fuse space and time. More specifically, they are chronotropes of national monumental time (cf. Herzfeld 1991), only now stripped of its Soviet dimension. There is no official saints' canonization process in Islam, but one could argue that what has been going on in Uzbekistan since independence is a kind of canonization of the saints of the nation, an attempt to appropriate the *avliyo* associated with the area, emplot them as narrative heroes in national history, pay tribute to them for their contribution to the spirituality of the nation and make them important sites for the articulation and institutionalization of national culture (cf. Paul 2002). They are made prime symbols of what Michael Herzfeld (1997) has termed 'structural nostalgia', which is 'the collective representation of an Edenic order – a time before time – in which the balanced perfection of social relations has not yet suffered the decay that affects everything human' (ibid.: 109). They are made national ancestors, representatives of a time when state intervention was unnecessary for the conduct of a decent social life, and they thus legitimize such intervention as a technique for restoring such a formerly perfect social order (ibid.).

Ziyorat in national space

No wonder, then, that the practice of *ziyorat* remains very popular in post-Soviet Uzbekistan – or rather has become popular in a different way; for if it was a public secret in Soviet days, it has now become conspicuously public. From being associated with the most backward aspects of local culture and a cause of embarrassment, *ziyorat* has become something that leading government officials willingly engage in, in particular on the occasion of national celebrations of saints and scholars, and preferably in front of running cameras. The political elite has turned *ziyorat* into a national commemorative ceremony: that is, a ritual which not only implies continuity with the past by virtue of a high degree of formality and fixity, a characteristic of ritual in general, but which also explicitly claims to commemorate such continuity (cf. Connerton 1989: 48).

Some people consider the practice of veneration of saints *bid'a*, a heretical innovation not conforming to the *sunna*;[23] or as *shirk* (idolatry). As many

Uzbeks are very conscious of the fact that the practice of *ziyorat* and the belief in the *karama* (miracles) of *avliyo* distinguishes their Islam from that of the 'Wahhabis' who condemn such practices and beliefs as *bid'a*, sceptics and unbelievers are usually careful not to condemn *ziyorat* unambiguously and publically. The veneration of saints, in other words, has also become a sign of loyalty to the regime and commitment to national tradition. Even declared atheists may engage in the practice of *ziyorat* because they consider it an important national 'tradition', or because they want to demonstrate their loyalty to the regime.

Many shrines are accessible at any time. People embark on *ziyorat* in groups – of families, friends, colleagues and/or neighbours – or alone. In contrast to the mosque, furthermore, where religious rites are oriented towards and dominated by men, women seem slightly dominant as visitors to the shrines. If there is a *domlo* present, visitors will usually have him or her read the *Fatiha*, the first *Sura* of the Qur'an, followed by a *duo*, a free prayer in plain words and local language: sometimes a standard version used by the *domlo*, sometimes a more personal one inspired by the specific requests of the visitors. The *avliyo*, who is considered to be close to God, is asked to intercede with God on behalf of visitors. In return, visitors will usually give the *domlo* some money or some sweets, cakes or bread. Sometimes they will circle the tomb, touching it with their hands or other parts of their bodies and placing small votive offerings such as grain or coins on it. At larger shrines there might be a place with facilities for slaughtering and preparing animals for sacrifice. A sacrifice is sometimes made after the favourable outcome of an event – recovery from illness, graduation, release from prison, for example – especially if one has requested this successful outcome from the saint. The slaughtered and prepared animal should then be offered to other visitors too. At shrines there might also be a spring or a well where pilgrims can clean themselves, drink the water, which is considered healing, and fill up bottles of it to take home. At some shrines it is relatively common for people – in particular those with serious problems – to come to sleep in order to subject themselves to the force of the place more intensely and in order to dream, considering dreaming a state where the *ruh* (spirit) is able to leave the body and move around freely, meeting and communicating with other spirits, and where a human being with a clean heart may receive messages from God and his *avliyo*. People who come to sleep at shrines hope that the saints associated with the places will themselves in their dreams and give them a sign or an advice.

In fact, people can also pay *ziyorat* in their dreams, or experience *avliyo* appearing in their dreams, sometimes giving them more or less clear directions and advice about how to lead their lives. Such dream-encounters with saints become particularly important in situations where one's physical movement is inhibited: in Soviet times it was important for those who were afraid to perform physical *ziyorat*, and in post-Soviet society for people who are impaired in some way, because of illness for example. Dreams about *avliyo* also frequently lead to more or less dramatic changes in people's lives. In these dreams, the saint usually warns the dreamer that harm may befall him or her if proper action is not

taken, but also promises that if such action is taken, the dreamer will be freed from pain or illness, granted a child or a job – or whatever haunts his or her heart and mind. Such proper action may consist in starting to read *namoz*, visiting the saint's tomb regularly, stopping drinking alcohol – or more radically, devoting one's life to religious healing or service at a shrine (see also Chapter 7).

Living saints do not constitute an important factor in present-day Uzbekistan, in contrast to other places, for example North Africa or South Asia, where saints have continued to emerge (cf. Werbner and Basu 1998: 3) – and also in contrast with urban Kazakhstan, which has seen the emergence of what Bruce Privratsky terms 'new age saints' (2001: 182–4). A shrine guardian told me that a couple of years ago there was a man in Bukhara who claimed to be *avliyo*, and who roamed about the streets telling people that they should not eat pork or margarine. He was arrested, and nobody has heard from him since. Whether this story is true or not, a person claiming to be *avliyo* and operating outside the official Islamic establishment would probably have serious trouble with the authorities in present-day Uzbekistan. Living saints, as embodiments of the sacred, can be threatening Others in relation to centralized, bureaucratic religious institutions, as they are often outside the control of these institutions, and as they may provide the sacred with other faces than those these institutions promote. Living saints might deconstruct the nationalist plot into which *avliyo* have been woven in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. When the saint is made safely unreachable by being transformed into a shrine, a monument, ideological colonization and control seems like an easier project.

Hagiographies, nationographies and biographies

Bruce Privratsky has recently argued in the context of an ethnography of Muslim life among the Kazakhs of Turkestan (Privratsky 2001)[24] that the persistence of Kazakh religion during the Soviet period can be explained to a large extent by the capacity of collective memory to store religious values in ritual forms. Collective memory among the Kazakhs, Privratsky argues, is primarily affective: it depends on 'image-schematisms' such as dreams in which one sees one's ancestors or emotions experienced when passing a shrine. It is thus embodied: the persistence of Kazakh religion depends on a mnemonics of the body rather than abstract intellectual knowledge, and it is stored and evoked by landscape – shrines and cemeteries in particular – and language.

Not least because of the very rich ethnographic material that it presents, I find Privratsky's work very valuable for the study of Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia. I also believe that his focus on collective memory provide a relevant and insightful approach in a context where people are very concerned with recovering a perceived lost memory, as the Bukharans are. In both contexts, as Privratsky puts it, 'the Soviet concept of inevitable progress has been replaced by a sense that progress is impossible now without a sense of who we are as people, and from whom we have come' (ibid.: 247). Privratsky is aware that

collective memory suffers under the burden of association with ethno-psychological theories of a reified group mind, and emphasizes that in a careful theory of collective memory it is individuals, not groups or societies, who remember (ibid.: 249–50). His extensive quotations from his informants also help to avoid the essentialization of collective memory. In his concluding remarks he nevertheless reveals a tendency to present collective memory as if it were a collective unconscious or group mind that has been recovered now that external circumstances allow it. 'The Kazak case,' writes Privratsky,

> shows that religious amnesia is reversible. A people may suppress its memories for tactical reasons and then bring them forth again when forgetting is no longer adaptive. The Kazak communities were determined to forget Islam, but now many of the same people are retrieving it in various ways. Like a cameraman, the memorial process shifted its focus to a different image of the past in response to a new vision of the future. The same symbolic structure was capable of two different historical narratives, indeed two different ontological systems.
>
> (ibid.: 247–8)

Rather than likening the memorial process to a 'cameraman' shifting focus, I prefer to speak in terms of the continuously shifting perspectives on the past held by various actors in specific situations characterized by specific concerns, and the continuous creation of social memory in this process. In addition, I place a greater emphasis than Privratsky on the politics of collective memory, in other words on the way political constraints encourage the presentation of some memories and the suppression of others.

The first few times I visited the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine complex I was made acutely aware of the politics of collective memory. I got the impression that official ideology had actually been relatively successful in colonizing not only sacred space but also the lifeworlds of the visitors to it, changing the associations triggered by the shrines – that is, co-opting their great imaginative potential. My impression was that the hagiographies associated with these places and the way these hagiographies figured in the biographies of ordinary people were permeated by what one might term a kind of official 'nationography'. The visitors I met frequently talked about the place in ways that wove it into nationalist plotlines and they often referred me to the official information I could find in museums or various books. However, as time passed and I started to know people better I increasingly witnessed occasions and stories in which the *avliyo* of Bukhara did not (primarily) figure as national ancestors, in which their shrines did not (primarily) figure as national monuments, as places for national social memory. In these narratives, the *avliyo* figured rather as focal points for remaking lifeworlds that were threatened, unsatisfying or broken down and transformed into horizons of possibilities. Here the *avliyo* appeared as sources of unlimited power and imaginative potential – including the potential for critique of post-Soviet society and its predicaments. In other words, they figured as

chronotropes which fused space with alternative kinds of historical consciousness, alternative kinds of evoked pasts.

When we turn from the meanings of Islam on the ideological battlefield to the battlefield of everyday life in Uzbekistan, it appears that the meanings of the shrines are not that easy to control, although attempts have been made to do so. As a commemorative ceremony the practice of *ziyorat* may play a significant role in the shaping of communal memory, but the precise content of that commemoration is subject to continuous redefinition in the practice of everyday life. People are creatively able to relate the shrines and the officially sanctioned relatively unambiguous master narratives surrounding them to their own experiences, projects and hopes, sometimes changing their meaning considerably – contesting official narratives and their images of past, present and future.

In Chapter 5 I explore the practice of *ziyorat* in everyday life and develop a general analytical framework which will help to throw light on what I consider to be the most significant aspects of *ziyorat*.

4 Bukhara

The ancient oasis of Bukhara, today a city with a population of around 260,000 people, is situated in the southwestern part of Uzbekistan. As a focal point on the Silk Road and as a centre for Islamic philosophy, art and theology, Bukhara was long a meeting point for people from very different parts of the world who spread new technologies, new ideas and new religions (Rashid 2002: 15). During the Persian Samanid dynasty (874–999), which ruled over a vast territory from their capital in Bukhara, being the patrons of one of the greatest periods of Islamic art, culture and science in Central Asian history, Bukhara became a centre of Islamic learning. The city lost its political significance under the Qarakhanids (999–1178) and was in 1220 virtually destroyed by Mongol invaders led by Genghis Khan. Later, the city fell under the shadows of Samarkand, as Amir Timur made Samarkand the capital of his vast empire. The Timurid dynasties ruled until the invasion of Uzbek tribes early in the sixteenth century. Under the Uzbek Shaybanids, Bukhara had another period of prosperity: in 1555, Abdullah Khan transferred the capital of the Shaybanid state from Samarkand to Bukhara. The Uzbeks soon broke up into smaller principalities, and internal feuds amongst them led to the evolution of three khanates based on the cities of Khiva in the west, Bukhara in the centre and Kokand in the east. With the discovery of the sea route to India, the importance of the Silk Road declined, and Bukhara lost much of its political and economic significance (Critchlow 1991: 169; Rashid 1994: 16; Voll 1994: 64). Following the Russian expansion in Central Asia in the nineteenth century, the Emirate of Bukhara became a Russian protectorate in 1868. In 1920 the Emir of Bukhara was overthrown by Red Army troops and a Bukhara People's Republic was established which lasted until the 1924 'national delimitation' which divided it between the newly created Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics. The city of Bukhara then became the capital of the Bukhara region in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

While it lost its political and economic significance, Bukhara did retain its symbolic importance and reputation – even while leading an existence in the periphery of the vast Soviet empire. It still retains this symbolic importance and reputation which are now part of the national heritage of the republic of Uzbekistan. 'Bukhara is no less a city of the imagination than it is a real place', as Theodore Levin (Levin 1996: 85) has so aptly put it.

A city of the imagination

Bukhara has gripped the imagination of outsiders is a variety of ways. In the Western world it has been surrounded by Orientalist imaginaries, epitomizing the mystery of the Orient. The tales told by nineteenth century European travellers to the Emirate of Bukhara – tales which drew pictures of a timeless medieval order and told of oriental despotism and ruthless tyrants, spectacular executions,[1] hostility towards strangers, illustrious merchant trade, colourful bazaars, strict religious observance, as well as the seclusion of women in harems and behind veils – triggered the mixture of repulsion and fascination that characterizes Western Orientalist fantasies (Fihl 2002: 433; Northrop 2004: 34–8).

In the Muslim world, Bukhara's past as a centre for Islamic learning and mysticism gave it a reputation as one of the most sacred places on earth. Bukhara still enjoys this reputation, not least in Central Asia. The city is home to the shrines of several important personages in the development of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi *tariqa* as well as numerous other *avliyo* and therefore a centre of pilgrimage as well as a significant place in the embrace of Islam by post-Soviet Uzbek nation building. Bukhara is a special place – for people who live there, for pilgrims who visit it, for Uzbeks whose purely imagined Bukhara serves as a focal point of identification and for nationalist discourses. The city anchors lives (cf. Feld and Basso 1996: 7), practised as well as imagined. Bukharans take pride in recounting the story of how when the Afghan mujahidin took Soviet soldiers as prisoners during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, they would always ask them where they came from. If they came from the Christian parts of the Soviet Union – from Russia, Belarus or Ukraine for example – they were executed; if they were from Central Asia they were released – and if they were from Bukhara, the Afghan mujahidin would not only set the prisoners free; they would even show them reverence and respond with an *omin!* (amen!).

A city encountered

When I arrived in Bukhara for the first time on a hot day in June 1998, after a nine-hour car ride from Tashkent, I could not help feeling slightly disappointed. Carrying somewhat Orientalist images of Bukhara in the back of my head, what I had expected to see when we entered the city from a perhaps once impressive but now unkempt four-lane highway was not the endless rows of grey and dreary apartment blocks which lined up in front of our eyes, some of them decorated with faded wall paintings commemorating past events such as the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980. Were it not for the voice of Yulduz Usmonova[2] which sounded from the car's tape cassette player and the sight of women parading their colourful *ikat*-woven dresses at the roadside I could have been anywhere in the former Soviet Union. The driver, however, noted that we had arrived in Bukhara and soon after stopped the car outside one of the apartment blocks which housed what was going to be my very first home in the city. From my windows, broken and provisionally repaired with pieces of cardboard, there

was a view to some rusty playground equipment and a smelly garbage container, the contents of which blew around with the wind, much to the pleasure of the occasional stray dogs. On the wall hung an old non-functioning air conditioner, and out of my water pipes came a brownish fluid which only made the heat seem even more unbearable.

As mentioned, every landscape tells or *is* a story. The urban landscape of Bukhara, so full of telling contrasts, almost cries out to be read as a story about the region's turbulent twentieth century history: the decay of the suburbs and their apartment blocks, which once stood out as symbols of the modernization of Central Asia, and the horses, donkeys and sheep grazing next to the voluminous monuments of Sovietization – war memorials and party headquarters – seem like ironical comments on the fall of an empire. The beggars in the street and the bazaars offer glimpses of the tragedies of post-Soviet change, as does the heart-breaking sight of provisional stands with people who, ruined and without prospects of improving their situation, have resorted to selling their personal belongings: traces of whole life stories spread out for sale on a blanket. The omnipresence of small private shops and street traders selling selections of imported goods from Russia, China and Europe, the brand-new bank buildings, and the *choi-xona*s (tea-houses) where visitors sit in the shade of bright red Coca-Cola parasols bear witness to the recent market economic reforms – and the large billboards and wall paintings crying out nationalist slogans such as 'Uzbekistan – the great state of the future!' or 'Independence, peace, friendship!' tell about the new ideological winds blowing across the country.

Though Coca-Cola parasols can also be spotted here, Bukhara's old city more readily captures the Orientalist imagination with its narrow, winding, unpaved and dusty alleys lined with windowless, thick-walled, low houses of sun-dried bricks. It is also in the old city that one finds the majority of the remnants of the city's golden past: the impressive mosques, *madrasa*s and *khanaqah*s. During my fieldwork many of them were under renovation, standing out as signs of the co-optation of Islam in the post-Soviet Uzbek government's nation-building project. Orientalist imaginaries are also triggered by the bazaars, which have always captured the attention of travellers with their colourful and abundant displays of local produce, and which now, offering anything from electronics from China to sausages from Denmark, recall the days when Bukhara was a focal point on the Silk Road, a trading centre and meeting place for people from East and West.

And then, of course, there are the shrines.

Shrines in Bukhara

In Bukhara shrines are everywhere, as one notices if one is not too distracted by the brand-new bank buildings or the flashy billboards at the radial roads with Coca-Cola bidding welcome to Bukhara, or by the endless rows of apartment blocks. If one is not too distracted by such signs of an emergent global capitalism and of the heydays of Soviet modernism, one notices shrines everywhere.

These shrines are traces of the golden past that made Bukhara known as *Buxoroi Sharif* (Noble Bukhara) and gave it a reputation as one of the most important or holy places in the Muslim world, apart from Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem – a reputation that led people to say that it is not heaven's light that lights up Bukhara, it is the light from Bukhara that lights up heaven. A *domlo* (shrine guardian) at the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine told me that when the Prophet Muhammad reached the sky on his *Mi'raj* (ascension to heaven)[3] he saw the light falling from heaven and down unto the earth. Only at one place did he see a light which emanated from the earth – that place turned out to be Bukhara. Seeing that, the prophet said that many saints would be born in Bukhara. I heard a couple of versions of this story which had a modernist twist. Here it was not the prophet, but rather some cosmonauts flying around in outer space whose privileged viewpoint made it possible for them to perceive the light emanating from Bukhara. Even though people living there may not notice or be aware of this light, it is said, it influences their very being nonetheless: no matter how dark his or her heart is, a man told me, any man or woman who visits Bukhara will eventually become Muslim.

And some become saints. Numerous saints are in fact associated with the city and its surroundings.[4] Some locals speak about this fact as if Bukhara were an ecosystem particularly favourable to *avliyo*. Answering my question about why there have been so many *avliyo* in Bukhara, for example, a woman said that

> If you are *Halal*[5] yourself . . . if, for example, your mother is *Halal*, it is passed onward . . . In Bukhara I believe that the earth has been *Halal*, good. When the earth is good, good, pure souls come from it. And because the earth of Bukhara has been good, some good *avliyo* have grown up here.

Most shrines in Bukhara are gravesites, the burial places of saints. Others are places with another connection with a saint, such as a place with which he or she has been in contact, has rested or performed a miracle, for example. Terms such as *mozor* (graveyard) or *ziyoratgoh* (place of visit) are used about them, but they are most frequently referred to as *avliyo*[6] or *pir*.[7] No verbal distinction is made between the *avliyo* or *pir* as a living or dead person or as a sacred place[8] – which points to the fact that their tombs, and, more generally, the physical materials associated with them, are commonly regarded as extensions of them, as somehow embodying their powers. Some of Bukhara's *avliyo* are associated with the Sufi orders, notably the *Yetti Pir* (Seven *Pir*s) all of whom are important links in the Naqshbandiyya *silsila* (spiritual chain).[9] The first link was Abdulxoliq G'ijduvoniy (d. 1220), who is said to have laid down the main principles upon which the later Naqshbandiyya was built and to have adopted the silent *zikr* (recollection of God) which he spiritually transmitted to Bahouddin Naqshband (cf. also Algar 1990a: 8–9; Schimmel 1975: 364). His tomb, situated in the town of G'ijduvon around 40 kilometres north of Bukhara city, is a very popular object of *ziyorat*. The next five links in the Naqshbandiyya *silsila*, Xoja Orif ar-Revgariy (d. 1259[10]), Xoja Mahmud Anjir Fag'naviy (d. 1245 or 1272),

Xoja Ali Rometaniy (d. 1306 or 1321), Muhammad Boboiy Samosiy (d. 1340 or 1354) and Sayyid Mir Kulol (d. 1371), are also buried close to Bukhara city. The last two were directly associated with (that is, they were teachers of) the next link, Bahouddin Naqshband (d. 1389).[11] A very popular shrine also exists for Abdulqodir Giloni (1088–1166[12]), founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi *tariqa* and one of the most popular saints in the entire Islamic world. It is said that Abdulqodir Giloni – in Bukhara better known as *Pir-I dastgir* (the *Pir* who keeps one's hand) – visited the city and worked there for a while. His shrine is now surrounded by blocks of flats, playgrounds where children run about, and a restaurant whose visitors, much to the regret of many pilgrims to the shrine, commit sacrilege by drinking vodka in its proximity.

Some *avliyo* are associated with the conversion of the people in the region to Islam, such as Imom Xoja Baror, who is said to have played an important role in making Bukhara's inhabitants convert to Islam. He accomplished this by curing the city's disabled, the blind, the deaf and the mentally ill in the name of Allah right after the region was conquered by the Arab Umayyad dynasty in the beginning of the eighth century. Around his tomb grew what is now Bukhara's central cemetery.

Another popular shrine is *Chashma Ayub* (Spring of Ayub) which was established in the twelfth century and is associated with Ayub – or Job – the biblical prophet who is mentioned in the Qur'an as one of the prophets to whom God gave special guidance and inspiration, and who is a model of patience in Islam as in both Judaism and Christianity. The story goes that Ayub was an exceptionally pious, God-fearing man whom God had blessed with all kinds of wealth, a large family and good health. One day, Satan expressed doubt about the sincerity of Ayub's faith, claiming that if God withdrew his blessing, Ayub would no longer worship God. To prove Ayub's sincerity, God allowed Satan to put him to the test. Satan then destroyed Ayub's possessions, killed his children and filled his body with diseases and pain. Through all his suffering, which lasted for 40 years, however, Ayub's faith remained intact. When he asked God for mercy God told him that he should strike the ground. When Ayub did so, a fountain appeared, and when Ayub washed himself with and drank the water, his good health was immediately restored, and everything became as it had been 40 years before. According to the legend, *Chashma Ayub* is this spring.[13]

Often hagiographic narratives deal with oppositions between secular and divine power; that is with the superior power of divinely inspired spirituality over temporal or secular authority (cf. Crapanzano 1973: 48; Geertz 1968: 33–5; Werbner 2003: 87). Some secular rulers, however, are also conceived of as *avliyo*. In Bukhara the most notable example is Ismail Samani, whose conquests of Khorasan and later the whole of Persia laid the foundations of the Persian Samanid dynasty that ruled from 874 to 999 from their capital in Bukhara. This dynasty became the patrons of one of the greatest periods of Islamic art, culture and science in Central Asian history. According to a popular legend, Ismail is still engaged in state matters. According to another, he left his instructions about how his empire was to be ruled in the future in a crack in his tomb, where many

believers now 'post' their requests or place small votive offerings. Today the Samanid mausoleum, an immensely beautiful brick building situated in the Samani (former Gorkiy) Park in the centre of the city, is a very popular place of *ziyorat.*

Some *avliyo* are regarded as the patron saints of various occupations, notably handicrafts, such as for example Boboyi Porado'z, who is patron saint of shoemakers, Usta Ruhiy, patron saint of metalworkers, Jonmardi Qassob, patron saint of butchers, Imom Muhammad G'azzoliy, patron saint of tailors – and numerous others (see Yo'ldoshev 1997: 123). And then there are all the more anonymous *avliyo*, less visible to the untrained eye and typically known only to a few people in the immediate vicinity of their shrines or by family members. For example, I only learned about the shrine of Chuja Chofiz Buxoriy, which is situated in the basement of a private home in Bukhara's old town, because I accidentally fell into conversation with some people from that area. Whereas a relatively formalized hagiographic complex is typically related to larger and better-known *avliyo*, as one of the constituents of their very 'placeness', no hagiographic reasons are usually given for why the less well-known *avliyo* should be venerated as such. Their reputation, the 'placeness', which encourages people to dwell there, is rather constituted by the special practices taking place around them as well as by what is typically an array of local miracle stories that demonstrate their powers. Salima, the guardian of the shrine of Chuja Chofiz Buxoriy, did not know much about him. She had married into the family that lived there, and one night the saint had revealed himself to her in her dream and said that she had to work as a *tabib* (traditional healer) there. If she did that, she – who was an epileptic – would be cured; if not, she would become seriously disabled.[14] She did what the saint asked, and the shrine had now gained a reputation in the neighbourhood as a place where various headaches in particular could be cured. But who Chuja Chofiz Buxoriy had been, apart from being an *avliyo* that had called on Salima to work as a healer, and whose force helped her healing, was apparently unknown.

Certain shrines are considered to have specialties in miraculous action. Such specialties typically relate to the particular life story of the saint: because the saints have experienced difficulties similar to those that lead pilgrims to their shrines, they are considered particularly sympathetic and helpful towards these pilgrims. Hagiographies of saints, in other words, inspire biographies of ordinary people, and often people have relations with specific *avliyo* whom they consider to be particularly influential in their lives. Craftsmen, for example, visit the patron saints of their respective handicrafts. People typically visit the shrine of Ayub to ask for patience if they are undergoing great difficulties that they find hard to endure, with the hope that their problems might be solved as miraculously as Ayub's troubles were. They visit the shrine of Said Ahmad Pobandi Kushod in the old city who, according to the legend, was thrown in jail and put in chains, but broke the chains each time it was time for reading *namoz* (the ritual prayer) – when they experience their 'hearts being in chains', i.e. when they experience being inhibited in their agency in whatever they are concerned

with. Also the shrine of Bahouddin Naqshband, though usually considered an 'all-round' shrine, is considered by some to be particularly suitable for those who seek help in business matters, as Bahouddin is known to have worked himself and been successful at combining devotion to God with worldly engagement.

I shall return to the shrines and their significance in the lives of the people in present-day Bukhara. The remaining part of this chapter will situate the study in a description of Bukhara and its citizens and the wider cultural, social and economic dimensions of Uzbek society and culture.

Ethnic composition

As already mentioned, Bukhara was long a meeting point for people from very different parts of the world. Even today Bukhara is renowned for – and Bukharans take great pride in – the accommodation and relatively peaceful coexistence of various ethnic and religious groups in the city through history.

Prior to the Russian colonization of Central Asia in the nineteenth century, notions of ethnicity and nationality were largely alien to the peoples of the region. The most important criteria for defining identity were the distinction between pastoral nomads and sedentary oasis dwellers, the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as kinship, locality and social status (Chuvr 1993; Schoeberlein-Engel 1996; Segars 2003). People in Bukhara tended to see themselves primarily as 'Bukharans': the European style of ethnic-linguistic nationality consciousness was alien to them and Turkish–Iranian bilingualism was the rule (Akiner 1997a; Cornell 1999: 188; Kocaoglu 1973: 154–5; Segars 2003: 90–1). As far as an Uzbek national consciousness is significant among people in Bukhara, it is largely the result of the national delimitation in 1924–5 which fixed the borders between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the basis of ethno-linguistic criteria, turned these regions into sovereign republics and gave them the names of their titular nationalities. During this national delimitation Bukhara ended up in the territory of Uzbekistan, although most of the city's inhabitants were Tajik speakers. After the 'national delimitation' it was primarily Russian that was promoted in the region as the official medium of communication, whereas Tajik remained the daily colloquial language. In 1989, Russian was officially replaced by Uzbek as the official language of Uzbekistan (Dollerup 1998; Schlyter 1995). Still, however, the majority in the Bukhara I encountered spoke Tajik as their first language.

If most people in Bukhara speak Tajik as their first language, most Tajik-speaking people in Bukhara (and in Uzbekistan as a whole, cf. Foltz 1996) are officially designated as ethnically 'Uzbek' in their passports, reflecting the fact that people who ended up on the Uzbek side of the border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan felt forced into accepting an Uzbek identity in the years after the national delimitation (Schoeberlein-Engel 1996). Today, however, people do not seem to consider their Uzbek identity as something that has been forced upon

them. They do not conceive of themselves as 'Tajik' but indeed rather as 'Uzbek'. In other words, the language criterion, which was considered so important to the definition of national identity by Soviet, and later Uzbek, nation-builders, is not considered particularly important by people in Bukhara (cf. also Schoeberlein-Engel 1996; Wixman 1991). Many people in Bukhara, furthermore, when confronted with the fact that they speak Tajik but are referred to as Uzbeks in their passports, reply by pointing out that the 'national delimitation' back in the 1920s actually created artificial differences between people that were basically one people – 'Bukharans' – with the same culture. As one commented (cf. also Becker 1973: 161),

> After the revolution people here were forced to decide whether they were Tajik or Uzbek. If you called yourself Tajik you were provided with a Tajik passport. If you called yourself Uzbek, you were provided with an Uzbek passport. That is what it was like for my mother. Formerly, she had been Bukharan – well, she still is.

In many people's opinion what is spoken in Bukhara is not Tajik but 'Bukharan' (*Buxoro tili*). Many Tajik or 'Bukharan' speakers express frustration about the language policies that were launched after independence: for decades they had been forced to send their children to Russian schools in order to secure them a good living in a society where Russian language proficiency was essential if one wanted to make a good career for oneself. Now they could watch these investments in their children's future becoming valueless with the changing ideological winds. From one day to the other they had become reduced to strangers in their own society – notwithstanding the fact that they belonged to a city that was central to the national imaginary.

This fate of suddenly being reduced to strangers in their own society is one that they share with the Russian minority as well as other Russian-speaking ethnic groups. The breaking up of the Soviet Union provided these Russians and other members of titular nationalities with new 'homelands' to which they might return. Large numbers migrated following independence (Olcott 1996), but for most people these were places they – or even their ancestors – had left long ago. As Martha Brill Olcott has noted, few of the non-indigenous people living in Central Asia had homes elsewhere to which they could return in any realistic sense (ibid.). And so they were left in a vacuum, neither belonging to their imaginary homelands nor feeling at home in the place where they had made themselves a living (cf. also Uehling 2001: 391 on the Crimean Tatars in Central Asia).

For many centuries[15] Bukhara hosted and was known for a relatively large Jewish community. The interaction between Jews and Muslims in Bukhara has sometimes been held up as a model of peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence. The Jewish community, however, has most often lived under various social and legal constraints. In the Bukharan Emirate certain professions, for example, were forbidden for Jews, while others were dominated by them: they were cloth dyers,

jewellers, cobblers, tailors, barbers, money changers and musicians (Akiner 1997a: 366; Levin 1996: 91–2). Since the late 1980s the majority of Bukhara's Jews have migrated to Israel or to Queens in New York, and only a small community remains.

Other minor ethnic groups in Bukhara include Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Ukrainians, Turkmens, Tatars[16] and Koreans.[17] Communities of Romas are also settled in Bukhara. As is the case in many other parts of the world, Romas are looked upon with ambivalence and find themselves in marginalized positions within society. On the one hand they are shunned and feared, having the reputation of being aggressive, untrustworthy and of engaging in criminal activities, and doing jobs that are deemed repugnant by others (at cemeteries for example). On the other hand, they are also sought out for help in various situations of crisis, as they are believed to possess certain kinds of knowledge, notably knowledge of divination, which are not possessed by others, and which are considered morally dubious (see also Chapter 5).

Coping with economic decline

Since independence in 1991, the Uzbek government has followed a path of gradual economic transition from the centrally planned Soviet economy, in which Uzbekistan's role was producer of primary products (particularly cotton) and natural resources (particularly gold), to a market-based economy. So far this transition has resulted in a significant fall in living standards for most of the population, especially the more disadvantaged in society. Production has declined in most sectors; unemployment is high and seems to be increasing, though reliable official statistics do not exist on this precarious subject. Most Uzbeks have experienced a steady fall in the level of real wages due to high rates of inflation, the liberalization of prices and the reduction of subsidies (Akiner 1997b; Everett-Heath 2003; McAuley 1995; Hunter 1996; Roy 2000; Spechler 2000). Average salaries are hardly sufficient for bare subsistence, and a large class of 'new poor' has been formed (Ilkhamov 2001).

Although Bukhara is not the most seriously affected region[18] it is no exception to this general trend. In the face of economic decline many people have been compelled to find alternative or supplementary sources of income. Some have started engaging in potentially more profitable though also highly risky trading activities (cf. also Chapter 8); some have found work in the private tourist and service sector; some have taken up one of the traditional handicrafts such as silk weaving, gold and silk embroidery, copper chasing, wood carving and miniature painting: crafts which seemed to be dying out during the Soviet period, as cheaper, mass-produced products came to dominate the market, but which have been restored after independence. Professionals and members of the intelligentsia are among the most seriously affected. While still enjoying prestige and recognition by virtue of their education many are not able to make a living on their salaries. It is not uncommon to meet highly trained professionals, doctors or university staff for example, who make their living and provide for

their families as taxi drivers, domestic workers or petty traders. A huge shadow economy also flourishes. Uzbekistan is a notoriously corrupt country[19] whose citizens face 'hidden charges' everywhere in their engagement with society. As a rule, people in Uzbekistan need to pay bribes to obtain a job, pass an exam, enter university, get access to proper medical treatment, deal with tax inspectors and customs officers and so on. In turn they see money opening every door for those people who possess it. Virtually everything can be bought and sold at the black market, and jobs, driver's licences, exam papers, the resolution of law suits and the evasion of military service are no exception (cf. also Korotyeva and Makarova 1998b: 591).

It is widely recognized that women are the worst affected by the general deterioration of the economy. Women's domestic responsibilities (see below), combined with a trend towards early marriage, make women less competitive in Uzbekistan's tight employment situation. Women are affected by the closing down or rising costs of daycare and kindergartens. Furthermore, there is evidence that young women are being denied equal opportunity to pursue vocational and higher education due to the increasing official costs and 'hidden charges' of education. A few, mainly younger women with good language skills, however, have found new and better paid employment with foreign employers (Asian Development Bank 2001; Kamp 2004). While it might be the case that women have been the worst affected by the economic decline, it is also important to recognize that the rising unemployment and the difficulties of providing for one's family have been a hard blow for many men. In a society where masculine identity is very much bound up with the ability to provide for one's family, the inability to do so can be felt as emasculation (cf. Chapter 5).

Everybody to the cotton!

Uzbekistan is the world's second-largest cotton exporter and fifth largest producer.[20] Soon after the Russian conquest of Central Asia in the mid-nineteenth century, civil war broke out in the United States, disrupting their supply of cotton to Europe. The Czar government then ordered that Uzbekistan and surrounding regions be turned into vast cotton plantations. Soviet leaders extended and intensified Uzbekistan's cotton production, in the process creating what was to become one of the world's worst human-induced environmental disasters: so much water from the Amu Daryo River was let into cotton irrigation channels that none was left to flow into the Aral Sea, which has been all but eradicated.[21] Cotton is still Uzbekistan's main cash crop; it is the major source of export earnings[22] and a national symbol. Motifs of cotton flowers – Uzbekistan's 'white gold', as it is sometimes termed – decorate everything from wall paintings and billboards to teacups and *ikat* woven silk. Much as in Soviet times the cotton production is strictly government-controlled. The government dictates production quotas for each of the country's regions, leaving it to local officials to ensure that the quotas are met. The cotton is obtained by the state for a fraction of its true value (EJF 2005).

Also the Bukhara region bears its share of the country's cotton production. During the cotton harvest (usually lasting from early September until the end of October) Bukhara city becomes a desolate place. Most of the country's cotton is picked by hand. The state relies on cheap labour for this. In practice this means that people from all walks of life – in particular students, schoolchildren and public-sector workers, including medical staff at clinics and hospitals – are mobilized to pick cotton. Road signs with the wording *xamma paxtaga!* (everybody to the cotton!) are set up in the streets of the city, indicating where people have disappeared and where those remaining ought to follow them. Even the universities in Bukhara are deserted during the cotton harvest as the students are obliged to participate. Although officially a 'volunteer' activity done out of patriotism, students are in fact obliged to participate under threat of expulsion from the university. Furthermore, if they do not pick enough cotton – I heard everything from 20 and up to 80 kilograms per day as the required daily amount – their stipends are reduced or they are otherwise punished. Additional costs for food and lodging in the field leave many students indebted when they return to their studies. In some ways the cotton picking campaigns are valued by students as they offer a rare opportunity to interact with fellow students, including members of the opposite sex, in a relatively unconstrained way. At the same time, most students dread the hard work in the fields under the baking sun, the usually rather lousy lodging, the lack of drinking water and the suspicious food, not to mention the time taken from their studies. And so they display a lot of creativity trying to avoid going cotton picking. Families who can afford it may pay bribes to health authorities for a certificate of poor health. A young university student of my acquaintance, for example, asked a doctor, a friend of his father, to write a medical certificate saying that he was unable to work under the harsh sun in the cotton fields as he had recently had a plastic surgery in his face (his plan, however, did not wholly succeed; he was just assigned to work in the kitchen instead).

Gender relations and family patterns

For a long time the relation between the sexes has been considered a key to the achievement of an ideal order of society in Uzbekistan, as well as the rest of Central Asia – just as the relation between the sexes has been considered a key to understanding why the social order is in fact not ideal.

The Bolsheviks regarded the women of Central Asia as victims of patriarchal and religious repression. In Marxist terms, they therefore constituted a 'surrogate proletariat' – a large, latent group of potential allies – which could be mobilized in the class battle (Northrop 2004: 11–12, 77). In 1927, ten years after the revolution, the Soviet government initiated a campaign to emancipate the region's women from the yoke of tradition. This campaign, which in Uzbekistan became known as the *Hujum* (Attack), included mass rallies where women were encouraged to burn their veils, which for the Bolsheviks were icons of Islamic tradition, associated with repression, ignorance and religious fanaticism. The

Hujum was met with widespread resistance on the part of many locals who perceived it as an attack on local social and moral ideals. Women who threw off their veils were often rejected by their families or local communities, and some were even killed (Akiner 1997b: 270–1; Northrop 2004). As Douglas Northrop has demonstrated in his book *Veiled Empire. Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (2004), in the end the *Hujum*, ironically, actually increased people's identification with Islamic practices and symbols. The Uzbek women were squeezed between two sides in this battle. Both the Bolsheviks and their local opponents defined them as core symbols of the local culture and social order – a cultural core which was to be changed or defended. If they chose to throw off their veils, they would face punishment in their local community; if they chose to keep their veils, the Bolsheviks would denounce them as repressed and ignorant. Most women acted tactically according to what the situation demanded: many threw off their veils but donned them again as they returned to their local community (cf. Akiner 1997b: 270; Northrop 2004).

The efforts to emancipate Central Asia's women were not confined to the campaigns against Islam. A legal framework was established that codified women's rights. The introduction of compulsory primary schooling meant that women were better educated. Social clubs were also established for women, offering a range of medical, legal and educational services. Efforts were made to involve women in the political-administrative process. And daycare institutions were established which made it possible for women to participate in the labour force and pursue professional careers.[23]

As Shirin Akiner has pointed out (Akiner 1997b), the changes that took place mainly took place in the public sphere, whereas in the private sphere older patterns of behaviour continued to dominate (ibid.: 262), perhaps most notably in the rural areas of Central Asia, but also in well-educated families in the cities. No matter how successful a woman is in pursuing a career of her own, in Uzbekistan most people still tend to believe that her primary role is still the role of wife and mother occupied with domestic duties and with childbearing and childrearing as her most central tasks (cf. also Michaels 1998; Olcott 1991: 235, 242). As several observers have noted, in the end Central Asia's women did not become the expected revolutionary force; rather, and ironically, they became the guardians of tradition – traditional life being confined to and transmitted within the domestic sphere with which they were associated (Akiner 1997b: 276; Tett 1994; Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004; Poliakov 1992; for a similar observation on Azerbaijan, see Tohidi 1998).

After independence gender relations again assumed central importance in the state's social-architectonic project: during the *Glasnost* period in the late 1980s, parts of the Uzbek elite began to put forth the view that Soviet values had endangered the Uzbek family and to question Soviet views of gender relations, calling for a return to 'traditional' or 'natural' gender roles – that is for women to leave the workforce and stay home – and linking social problems with the process of women's emancipation (Akiner 1997b; Kamp 2004; Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004; Tokhtaxojaeva 1995). The post-Soviet Uzbek government has

taken up the challenge, trying to straddle two conflicting positions: on the one hand it has claimed to promote gender equality and protect women's rights – and indeed pointed to the restrictions that 'extremist' Islamist movements put on women as evidence of their anti-modern nature. On the other hand it has pointed to women's traditional role as the centre of the family as one of the pillars of the ideology of national independence (Akiner 1997b; Human Rights Watch 2001; Kamp 2004; Megoran 1999). What have primarily been on the agenda, then, are female gender roles. Male gender roles on the contrary have not been subject of much discussion; it seems they are taken much more for granted. For most people with whom I discussed gender roles in Uzbekistan male identity is inextricably bound up with the ability to perform successfully in the public sphere and to be the head of one's family, providing for its material and financial needs, while at the same time serving one's country like the historical heroes – almost all male (Megoran 1999) – which are celebrated and put forward as examples in the nation-building project. This masculine ideal has roots far back in history in Central Asia and has in post-Soviet times also become imbued with the ideals of industriousness and entrepreneurship promoted as necessary for the realization of the country's great future. While studies have begun to emerge of how post-Soviet Central Asian women negotiate gender identities, how they respond to, resist and accommodate conflicting gender ideologies,[24] and how women in Soviet pre-Soviet times also did so[25] – much less attention has been given to how Central Asian men negotiate their role, how they work at 'being good at being men' (cf. Herzfeld 1985) in spite of circumstances – notably rising unemployment rates – which make it difficult to perform masculinity the proper way.[26] I shall return to this problematic in Chapters 5 and 7.

Young people in Bukhara grow up in an environment where the relations between the sexes are relatively conservative, and where norms of behaviour are secured by a high degree of community control. Bukhara may be a relatively large city but in many ways people experience it as a small community where everyone else knows all about everyone and where no transgression of social norms goes unnoticed. The young people I talked with were very conscious, and indeed proud, of their Bukharan identity, contrasting it with the alleged moral decline in Tashkent or in 'the West' as they imagined it. Occasionally, however, they would also express feelings of boredom and claustrophobia related to the place and a longing for greater personal freedom. A young Bukharan woman of my acquaintance, for example, who worked in an organization which also had a branch in Tashkent expressed a mixture of horror and fascination at the behaviour of her Tashkent colleagues with whom she went out to have dinner at a restaurant:

> They were *smoking* and wearing jeans, very tight, and lots of make-up . . . And people in Tashkent are very egoistic. They [the colleagues] went to order the food. And then it turned out that they were only ordering for themselves; they also ordered a little piece of bread for themselves. I was shocked . . . then I ordered a whole basket full of bread. The others asked

> me if I was really able to eat it all – I answered that it was for us all. In Tashkent they only order for themselves . . . If my mother knew about them she would never allow me to go to Tashkent again!

She found people in Tashkent egoistic and stingy and the girls shockingly liberal, but there was also something highly attractive about what she had experienced there. Also she was tired of what she found to be the provinciality and petty-mindedness of people in Bukhara. In Bukhara, she said, there was nothing for young people to *do* except from gossiping, studying, going to the market and attending *to'y*s. She sometimes expressed longing for a place where she would be allowed to wear trousers ('my dream, Maria, is to wear trousers'), and where there were not only *choi-xona*s (tea-houses) where elderly men pass the day chatting, drinking tea and playing dominos, but modern cafés where young people could meet members of the opposite sex without attracting gossip and without needing an army of chaperones to cover up. Like her, many young people in Bukhara dream of going to different places, living lives characterized by greater personal freedom. Most, however, stay, marry and raise their own family there.

According to Uzbek law the marriageable age is set at 17 for women and 18 for men. However, it is not uncommon to see the marriage of younger people (particularly girls). These marriages are just not registered with the authorities, but merely sanctioned by a mullah in a *niqoh* ceremony. Most often parents and other relatives assume responsibility for finding suitable spouses for younger family members, but usually the young people will have a say. Marriage negotiations can be a lengthy process. The initiative is taken by the boy's family, who will send a party of (female) intermediaries to the potential *kelin*'s (bride's) home to ask her parents for her hand. The matchmakers address the girl's mother and tell about the virtues of their son/brother/nephew. It is considered very impolite to reject a marriage proposal straight away, while it is considered a possible sign of desperation to accept immediately. Instead, the girl's mother will answer that she will think about it, that she will consult with her husband or the like, while she might hint at her true answer by accepting or rejecting the presents brought to her by the matchmakers. Sometimes it can take several visits before the matter is settled. During the period up to the marriage there are exchanges of gifts between in-laws, and the marriage in itself involves some sort of transfer of bride price as well as dowry, usually presented in the form of clothes, jewellery and household items.

Residence is preferably patrilocal: adult sons often continue to live in their parental home after they marry, bringing their *kelin* home to live there in an extended family that often has a shared economy (*kelin* in fact literally means 'incomer') (cf. also Akiner 1997b: 276). This is also often the case for families living in the Soviet apartment blocks. These apartment blocks were designed for nuclear families and with an intention to encourage people to relocate as nuclear families in separate households so as to liberate them from parental control and help them adopt a modern Soviet way of life (Harris 2004: 37–8). However,

what one frequently sees is that a family who lives in a modern apartment block will buy or rent an apartment nearby for their married son(s), thereby adapting the principle of the extended family to the modern surroundings.

The new *kelin* who moves into her in-law family's home is expected to conform to their conventions (cf. Akiner 1997b: 277). Nominally at least the family is patriarchal: the father is the head of the family, followed by his wife, and then by their sons in order of seniority, and finally by the son's wives in order of seniority. The *kelin* of the youngest son occupies the lowest position in the family.

Although polygamy is illegal in Uzbekistan it is not uncommon for wealthy Uzbek men to take a second wife, providing for a second family living in a separate home. As is the case with marriages of people who are younger than the official marriageable age, second marriages are sanctioned by a mullah, but not registered with the authorities (and therefore do not count as legal bigamy). In contrast to the Soviet period when polygamy was frowned upon and punished strictly, officials tend to turn a blind eye to it, and generally it is not disapproved of in society; for some it is actually a sign of prestige and respectability (cf. also Akiner 1997b: 287).

Social networks

Times of hardship such as those many people in Uzbekistan, as well as the rest of Central Asia, are going through have intensified their reliance on social networks for support. Money might have increased in significance as a means for gaining access to public services, jobs and higher education. Social connections however also remain very significant in this respect. In addition to their extended kin networks people nurture networks with friends, neighbours, colleagues and classmates through various kinds of exchange and barter – just as they did during the Soviet period when connections were essential for acquiring access to goods and services in short supply (cf. Korotyeva and Makarova 1998b).

Networks are cultivated through common activities and exchanges. The *gap* (conversation) is an important occasion for the creation and affirmation of social networks. During the *gap* a group of neighbours, classmates, relatives or colleagues gather over a meal. Sometimes a certain amount of money is paid to the host of the *gap*. In this case the *gap* serves as a rotating savings association (cf. Kandiyoti 1998: 570–6; Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004; Korotyeva and Makarova 1998b: 586).

Also religious gatherings such as the *Osh Bibiyo* held in honour of the female *avliyo* Bibi Seshanba (see Chapter 8) and the *mavlid* held in honour of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (cf. Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004: 338–40) constitute important occasions for cultivating, maintaining and expanding social networks, as do *to'y*s, that is, life-cycle celebrations connected with birth, circumcision and marriage. The household that is arranging a *to'y* usually invites their entire social network of relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbours,

which means that several hundred guests will usually attend such an events. *To'y*s are important occasions for the exchange of gifts and favours. Through this exchange households seek to display and negotiate relative status and to reinforce social networks which can be mobilized in daily life. The act of giving a gift creates indebtedness on the part of the recipient, who must provide a counter-gift of equal or greater value in the future in order not to lose face (cf. also Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004: 336–7; Kuehnast and Dudwiek 2004: 20; Werner 1999).

In spite of increasing economic hardship the costs of holding and attending *to'y*s have significantly increased since independence. People have been throwing increasingly lavish parties and bringing increasingly expensive presents, making *to'y*s one of the most important sources of household expenditure.[27] As Deniz Kandiyoti and Nadira Azimova argue, weddings have become arenas in which the widening economic gap between the 'new rich' and the 'new poor' has become increasingly conspicuous (Kandoyoti and Azimova 2004: 337). A presidential decree was passed in October 1998 banning ostentatious ceremonies as 'offensive' to the general public (ibid.), and one often hears people condemning lavish *to'y*s as wasteful luxuries. Despite these measures, Bukhara families feel a social pressure to participate (see Chapter 5) and indeed tend to look down on their countrymen in Tashkent whose stinginess, they believe, is shown by the fact that they tend only to throw small weddings for their closest relatives. As noted to be the case in rural Kazakhstan by Cynthia Werner (1999), *to'y*s are favourite subjects of local gossip: 'The number of guests, the presence of prominent individuals, the quantity and quality of food, the quality of entertainment and the magnitude of gifts, among other things, are discussed and compared, both before and after a feast' (ibid.: 59).

This inflation in feasting and gift exchange has been a significant factor in the increasing stratification of society in Uzbekistan as well as in other parts of Central Asia. As Kathleen Kuehnast and Nora Dudgwick (2004) have pointed out in a study of social networks in Kyrgyzstan, the main points of which apply to Uzbekistan as well, inflation has made it increasingly difficult for the poor to maintain networks with the non-poor because they are unable to afford the purchase of acceptable gifts for participation in traditional gift exchanges. By contrast, the non-poor are hosting ever more lavish feasts as a way of diversifying their networks and expanding their access to a vast array of resources. The networks of the non-poor are moving away from being networks based on ascriptive relationships to being interest based. Their strategic deployment of social networks in order to improve their economic and social status is replacing their traditional obligation to financially support poor relatives. As a result, the social networks of the poor and the non-poor have become polarized and separated, paralleling the sharp socio-economic stratification that has taken place since independence (Kuehnast and Dudgwick 2004).

The *mahalla*

An important social network in Uzbekistan is the *mahalla.* The *mahalla* is a neighbourhood community in which a committee of leaders (usually primarily elderly respected men), elected by residents and led by a chairman (*oqsoqol* or *rais*), regulates community life. It involves the inhabitants in a web of mutual responsibilities and exchanges. On major occasions in family life, such as weddings or funerals, the whole community usually assists, thus relieving the strain on individual families. The *mahalla* also provide tables, chairs, pots, plates etc. for such events. Religious feasts and national holidays are usually also celebrated in the context of the *mahalla.* The *mahalla* committee also organizes collective volunteer labour for activities such as cleaning the streets, guarding the territory at night, and various building and restoration projects.

Historically, the *mahalla* institution in Central Asia[28] can be traced to before the arrival of the Mongols, around the eleventh and twelfth centuries. During Soviet times, attempts were made to incorporate the institution into state and party structures. During the 1930s the *mahalla* was incorporated into the state bureaucracy as the *mahalla* committee was instituted. The *mahalla* committees were responsible for organizing ideological campaigns and lectures. However, according to the Russian ethnographer Sergei Poliakov, the *mahalla* in reality was often instrumental in maintaining traditionalism. *Mahalla* committee buildings, for example, sometimes substituted for mosques (Poliakov 1992: 78). After independence, the Uzbek state further codified and expanded the responsibilities of the *mahalla*. In 1993 and again in 1999, laws were passed that rehabilitated it in an explicit attempt to return to ancestral values, and 2003 was declared the Year of the *Mahalla*. This rehabilitation and promotion of the *mahalla* has resulted in an increase in the number of *mahalla*s, also in areas where this form of communal life has not been customary, that is, in buildings of several storeys with many Russian and other European inhabitants and in the countryside (Human Rights Watch 2001: 20 and 2003: 6; Koroteyeva and Makarova 1998a). Although Article 7 in the 1999 *mahalla* law states that the *mahalla* is not part of the system of state power, in practice the activities of the *mahalla* committees are directed by the district and city *hokimiat* (administrative government authorities)[29] who approve the elected committees and chairmen. Citizens are required by law to comply with decisions of their *mahalla* committees (Human Rights Watch 2003: 7). In 1999, furthermore, a *posbon* law was passed which created the position of *posbon* (community guardian or policeman). The *posbon* is paid by the state to work with the *mahalla* committee and the local police to prevent crime, maintain public order and to strengthen the social and moral environment as defined by the government (ibid.).

The appropriation of the *mahalla* committee by the Uzbek state has made it responsible for governmental functions such as distributing social welfare from the state to needy families, overseeing tax collection, preparing lists of candidates to be allowed to perform *Hajj*,[30] registering the whereabouts of *mahalla* residents, monitoring their religious beliefs and practices, and providing state

authorities with information on these matters when needed. It is responsible for rehabilitating and resocializing those discharged from penal institutions. If a family has problems, also of a seemingly personal character – if, for example, a family member takes drugs, is violent or wants a divorce – the *mahalla* committee will try to settle things through mediation and thus eliminate the need for legal action (cf. Akiner 1997b: 278; Human Rights Watch 2001; Human Rights Watch 2003; Kamp 2004; Koroteyeva and Makarova 1998a: 137–40). Furthermore, *mahalla* committees are expected to promote regime propaganda: they are expected to organize state sponsored festivals such as Independence Day and *Navro'z* (a festival in March celebrating the New Year). In addition, the educational programmes undertaken by the *mahalla* committees mirror state priorities, and each year the committee is obliged to present its programme of activities to the office of the district or city governor for approval (Rasanayagam 2005)

It is not everywhere in Uzbekistan that the *mahalla* has equally big significance. In many newly urbanized city districts which have had no history of *mahalla* organization, but where it has been imposed recently by central government, the *mahalla* is of minimal social relevance, whereas in other areas, Bukhara for example, the authority accorded to the *mahalla* by residents is greater (Rasanayagam 2005).

The *mahalla* is valued by most people as a social security network embodying moral ideals of solidarity and mutual help, while they also sometimes feel its social control and intervention in private affairs as suffocating or directly oppressive (cf. Harris 2004; Rasanayagam 2005, see also Chapter 5). It is felt as particularly oppressive by those who do not conform to social and moral norms: single mothers and divorcees for example (cf. Kamp 2004). In the following a case story will be given which illustrates the social control of the *mahalla* in present-day Bukhara. The story involves Shoira, a middle-aged woman who lived with her two sons, ages eight and 18, in an apartment in one of Bukhara's drearier apartment blocks.

Social control

Shoira had divorced her husband immediately after the birth of her youngest son. The husband drank too much, and once in a while he would come home drunk and beat her up and trash the apartment, shouting and smashing bottles against the walls (Shoira's arms gesticulated wildly whenever she told me about his fury, conveying a sense of her home turned into chaos). When he beat her up in spite of her being heavily pregnant, she decided to divorce him, and she had managed to stand by her decision in spite of the fact that everybody in her immediate surroundings – her own family, her family-in-law, her neighbours and the *mahalla* committee – tried to talk her out of it and find a way to reconcile her to her husband.

According to a recent Human Rights Watch report (2001), domestic violence is a markedly under-reported crime in Uzbekistan. A prime reason for this, according to the report, is the prevalent conviction that women themselves bear

the prime responsibility for their abuse, and that the very act of complaining about violence is therefore considered humiliating for the woman herself, an indication that she is a 'bad wife'. If the violence becomes too hard for a woman to bear, her primary recourse is often to leave her husband's family and return to her natal home if her parents agree to take her back. If she can overcome shame and fear, she can also appeal to her local *mahalla* committee for help. This body is charged with mediating family disputes, thus eliminating the need for legal action. In practice, according to the Human Rights Watch report, this often means coercing women to remain in abusive situations, ignoring the violence, and perpetuating impunity for violent husbands. Neither the family code nor the *mahalla* law endows *mahalla* committees with any formal role in divorce proceedings. Nonetheless, *mahalla* committees have been key actors in a government policy of keeping families together at all costs, acting as de facto family courts which often assume the role of gatekeepers, denying wives permission to divorce and holding them responsible for bringing on their husband's abuse (ibid.).

Once I discussed the issue of domestic violence with Alisher, the father of one of my host families who was on the local *mahalla* committee. He told me that if the committee became aware of a couple with problems in their relationship, it would do everything in its power to get the problems resolved in order to avoid their splitting up. When I asked why, he said that in addition to the fact that it would be shameful for the family in question, it would be shameful for the *mahalla* if they were not able to solve such conflicts without getting the police involved. His wife, who overheard our conversation, asked her husband if it was not also a shame that the wife and children in the family who used to live next door came knocking at their door regularly to ask if they could stay there until their husband and father, who had come home drunk and in a bad mood, fell asleep and stopped terrorizing them? Was it not a shame that the woman could sit and cry with a swollen face at their kitchen table, telling them how she wished she were dead? The *mahalla* committee did nothing to help her. In her opinion, the man should have been put in prison.

Shoira had decided to stand by her decision to divorce her husband in spite of the fact that the social stigma attached to her as a divorced woman was something she and her children – by many considered 'orphaned' – had had to struggle with on a daily basis from that time onward. Economically she was fairly well off, though. She had a job in a bank and supplemented her income by sewing for other people, so she managed to support herself and her children. Unfortunately, she suffered from a chronic illness, the exact nature of which she never revealed to me, but which in periods made her not only unable to work, but also unable to take care of her home and look after her children. On such occasions she would pay *ziyorat* to one of Bukhara's *avliyo*, or, if she was too ill to do so, *avliyo* and prophets – notably Bahouddin Naqshband, Ayub, the prophet Iso (Jesus) and Ibn Sina (by Shoira also considered *avliyo*) – miraculously appeared in her dreams and made her feel better, providing her with renewed strength.

I first met Shoira at the shrine of Sayfiddin Buxoriy where she had come in search of a miracle. She told me that a man at her workplace was trying to have her fired in order to get her position himself. He was spreading evil gossip about her, sending her the evil eye and saying that she was a bad woman who had orphaned her children by divorcing her husband. When I met her for the second time, a few weeks after, I asked her about how things were going at her job. She told me that by a miracle the envious colleague had been fired himself, as God had protected her from his evil eye.

Shoira was indeed a very religious woman. When she told me of her life, her narratives were populated with people who wished her evil, but despite them her life hung together by way of miraculous divine interventions. She downplayed any action she might carry out herself in order to reach what she desired and hoped for other than pray, pay *ziyorat* and adopt the attitude of patience towards life, believing that time was on her side. She never talked about any efforts to get promoted at the bank or to expand her sewing business in order to become self-employed.

Shoira's miracle narratives may seem like signs of a radically disempowered life. And in truth her life seemed like a daily struggle, a short-term coping with forces that she often did not understand and was in no control of: with people who had wanted her to stay with a violent husband who threatened to destroy all that she cared about, with people who envied her position in the bank and made efforts to get her fired, trying to profit from her social stigma as divorcee, and with a chronic illness that she never knew when it would make her unfit for work. To someone who did not know Shoira very well her preoccupation with miracles might have seemed like a sign that she had given up any hope of controlling the unpredictable forces that influenced her life; that she had surrendered to some kind of passive fatalism, while occasionally resorting to magical means in order to create some semblance of control. But Shoira actually worked extremely hard, both at the bank and at home, where she not only did all the housework, but also sat at her sewing machine late in the evening, working for the extra income that secured the family's living. In her spare (!) time she struggled to teach herself English, by way of some old schoolbooks and a couple of Agatha Christie novels given to her by an English woman she met a couple of years ago, and wrote stories and poems that she dreamt about having published one day: 'The heart with God, the hand at work. Working is also a way of serving God', she told me.

It may be that the miracle narratives were what enabled Shoira to act at all, far from indicating a surrender to fate or a passive waiting. In short, her miracle narratives can be understood as actually empowering. The way Shoira had chosen to live her life – divorcing her husband and raising her children herself – confounded the expectations of many people in her *mahalla* about how a woman's life should be, and there were people around her who made no secret of the fact that they did not accept it, considering her a bad woman and a bad mother who had not only orphaned her children, but also neglected them by working outside the home. By connecting her ways of acting with the secret purposes of God and his *avliyo*, by

downplaying her own efforts at creating a life and instead making God the primary – and fundamentally uncontrollable and unquestionable – agent in it, she transformed the subversiveness of her life, the fact that she managed to make a living herself, from a sign of unseemly conduct and moral degradation into a sign of divine blessedness. This is not to say that this was the deliberate intention behind her miracle narratives, that her way of connecting her life with the secret purposes of the Divine amounted to some kind of bad faith intended to convince others to approve of her way of living. I have no doubt that Shoira really experienced miracles happening around her. But the reason she accentuated these experiences so much might have to do with the empowering social effect this emphasis seemed to have in the surrounding social world.

However, not everyone was convinced that miracles really happened around Shoira all the time, and that saints really showed up in her dreams. And so her miracle stories and divine dreams did not always free her from social condemnation. One day Shoira received a visit from 'some policemen' who wanted to question her about her relationship with Islam. She recounted the event to me a few days later. The policemen had looked through her books, apparently searching for forbidden religious literature, and questioned her in detail about her whereabouts. She did not understand anything. She was very loyal to the government: more than once she had told me how much she loved the president and everything he had done for the country. And more than once she had contrasted her own understanding of Islam with that of the 'Wahhabis', whom she, much like official discourses, pictured as manifestations of some transcendental radical evil that appeared in different guises at different times of history: when she was a child, she had told me, a group of fierce men once came to her family's house, searched it and found some old books that they took with them in order to burn, some old jewellery that they put in their own pockets and the family's carpets, which they also confiscated before they left. The memory of these people had haunted her dreams since her childhood, and when people now talked about the Wahhabis, she saw these people in front of her eyes. It was as if they had come back. No wonder it was difficult for her to find herself suspected of having relations with this radical evil that filled her nightmares. She believed that the ignorance of the local police and the evil intentions of some of her neighbours who had probably gossiped about her were to blame for this. Those 70 years, she told me, had left many people here ignorant about Islam, unable to distinguish between good and evil, and unable to distinguish between proper and corrupted understandings of Islam. My field assistant Baxtiyor, on the other hand, suggested that the way Shoira talked about God all the time would be likely to attract suspicion in the *mahalla*.

Shoira never found out what it was that had raised the suspicion of the authorities: whether it was, as Baxtiyor thought, the way she 'always talked about God', or whether it was how her life generally speaking confounded the expectations of many people in her *mahalla*. In any case, the social control of the *mahalla* had been activated in order to make her comply with social and moral norms.

Navigating in chaos

In his book *Post-Soviet Chaos. Violence and Dispossession in Kazakhstan*, which is based on fieldwork carried out in Almaty, Joma Nazpary argues that post-Soviet reforms have dispossessed the majority of the population in Kazakhstan, making them lose economic, social and existential security. For the dispossessed in Kazakhstan, life is characterized by *bardak*, a Russian word literally meaning 'brothel', used as a metaphor for complete chaos (Nazpary 2002).

Experiences of loss and feelings of navigating in chaos were not unknown to the people I worked among in Bukhara. The society that has emerged in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union is one that many people experience as a mixed blessing, being increasingly disillusioned with the unfulfilled promises of the post-Soviet Uzbek government, which has left them struggling in their daily lives with economic despair and corruption. Life in Bukhara, as elsewhere in post-Soviet Central Asia, is characterized by chaos and existential insecurity, but also by hope and fascination with the new opportunities independence has brought about for those who understand how to navigate in the post-Soviet chaos. As I will show in the following chapters, sacred places are focal points for their efforts to create a satisfying existence in this changing social world.

5 *Ziyorat*

On a summer's day in 2000, a woman in her fifties named Feruza took the bus from Bukhara to Bahouddin Naqshband's shrine in Qashri Orifon. She had chosen to do so on an ordinary weekday in order to avoid the crowds of people who are often there during the weekend. She wanted to be alone, and she wanted to avoid gossip. Before visiting Bahouddin Naqshband's shrine she went to the shrine of his mother a few hundred metres away. This is common practice. Feruza, however, had a special reason to do so, as she had come to the shrine as a mother first and foremost. She handed the *domlo* there a 100 *so'm* note[1] and asked him to say a prayer for her son. She did the same at Bahouddin Naqshband's tomb, after which she went to a well in the shrine complex and filled a couple of empty plastic Coca-Cola bottles with water that she wanted to take home. On her way back on the bus she made the vow that if her wish came true – if the misfortunes that had plagued the family for some time now, especially her son, came to an end soon – she would make a *xudoiy* (sacrifice) at the shrine.

If one only considered the formal aspects of Feruza's visit to the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine, there would not be much remarkable about her acts. They would not differ in any significant sense from the acts that endless rows of people performed there: handing the *domlo* some money or some bread or sweets, asking him to say a prayer, circling the tomb, filling bottles with water. And they would perhaps not differ fundamentally from the acts that had been performed there 100 years ago either. One might perhaps conclude that nothing has changed significantly about these practices through time; that they, like some kind of mnemonics of the body, embody a transhistorical tradition that has kept a tight hold on the hearts and minds of people for centuries – just as most of the research on Central Asian Islam that was conducted in Soviet times would have it. Or such as those official master narratives in present-day Uzbekistan which present the national Islamic tradition as primordially given would have it. Indeed, when I asked Feruza why she did what she did when paying *ziyorat*, she shrugged her shoulders and told me that she just did what she had seen her parents and grandparents do, the only difference being that now she did not have to do it secretly.

Feruza's hints that there was really not much to talk about made me recall the first couple of months in the field that I spent tracking shrines down with my

field assistant Baxtiyor. Initially, Baxtiyor seemed to take great pleasure in these expeditions, because of the saintly blessings, and because of the car rides. At some point, however, he began asking me regularly me how many *avliyo* we needed to find, and how many interviews we needed to perform. One day he showed up with what he called a 'fantastic plan'. Why do we waste our time doing all these interviews, he asked and suggested that he simply do some 'interviews' for me: he could, for example, be an elderly man who was visiting an *avliyo* because of debt, or a young woman who came because she could not have children. He could also dress up in various costumes in order for me to take some pictures. Nobody would be able to tell the difference, and how would I be able to prove what I had done anyway? If I agreed to take this shortcut, we would soon get this work finished and be able to do some more exciting stuff like visiting an animal reserve or going swimming. Baxtiyor was getting bored. He increasingly seemed to find the practices that took place at the shrines banal, repetitive and therefore quite easy to imitate.

Although many of the formal features of religious practices may have remained relatively stable through history, this does not mean that the meanings of these practices have remained stable too. The more one shifts one's focus from the formal aspects of *ziyorat* to the concerns and stakes articulated in it and the meanings bestowed on it, the more the static picture begins to break down, or at least is supplemented by another one: an image filled with unfolding social dramas reflecting the predicaments and challenges of a changing Uzbek society and the ways in which people negotiate which parts of it are worth engaging in, and what it takes to do so successfully. Feruza did not mindlessly do what 'tradition' dictated to her; far from it. In her life saints were focal points for creative experimentation with different ways of remaking and re-imagining a sense of agency in a situation where her family's usual ways of acting had been blocked, and where supposedly empowering social relations were experienced as suffocating.

In the following section, I shall present an account of the concerns Feruza articulated in her visit, the social drama that was its occasion. This account is meant to serve as a prelude to an exploration of the meanings of sacred space and the practice of *ziyorat* in everyday Islam in post-Soviet Bukhara

Tohir

Feruza's son Tohir was the only son of the family. Then in his mid-twenties, he had a degree in English philology from the local university and had spent a significant part of the period of his studies doing an internship at a division of the state administration. He loved and took very much pride in his work, and expected eventually to be properly employed there himself so that he would truly be able to help his country on its road towards a bright future. *Dast ba koru, dil ba yor!* (The hand at work, the heart with God!) Tohir identified with this saying very much, believing that the best way to praise God was to serve one's country. Such was the situation when I met him and his family during my

fieldwork in 1998–9. When I came back in 2000 their situation had changed completely. Tohir did not work in the state administration any more. According to his former colleagues, the reason was his poor English skills. According to Tohir and his family, the reason was that he had had a conflict with his boss due to the fact that he did not share his colleagues' taste for nightly visits to restaurants, bars and discothèques, their fooling around with loose girls, and their participating in various shady affairs, including the acceptance of bribes.

Losing his otherwise unique opportunities for a good job was no small issue for Tohir. Not only his personal career as he had envisaged it for a long time was at stake; his parents refused to arrange his marriage before he had found himself a job that would enable him to support his own family. Until then, he would remain dependent on his parents like a child. Thus, the stakes were his honour, status and identity as a man and future family head.

Tohir tried to play on every string in order to return as an employee in the state administration. Initially, he tried to get on good terms with his boss again. As that strategy did not seem to work, he started asking his boss's superiors – people who now had positions abroad – for help. He had always got along well with them; he considered them his patrons, and now he expected them to help him. However, he had little success with his efforts. The door to his former place of work remained closed to him. Tohir interpreted the reluctance on the part of his former bosses as their refusal to fulfil their moral obligations towards him, the dominance of selfish considerations over morally righteous ones.

As time went by, Tohir became more and more paralysed and apathetic. It was as if nothing he did or said had any effect on the world anyway. Such an inability to act, a loss of agency, of social significance, would probably be devastating for most people, but is perhaps especially hard to bear for a young man like Tohir, who perceived his masculine identity as tied to his ability to make a difference in the world, or more specifically, to the state of affairs in the public sphere in the communities with which he identified. Like many other Uzbek men, then, Tohir was facing expectations that he would unfold and constitute agency through successful performance in the public sphere while at the same time struggling against forces beyond his control which obstructed his efforts to live up to this ideal. Being ashamed of that, he started barricading himself within the relatively safe and manageable space of the family's apartment. On the occasion of Independence Day he refused to go outside to take part in the celebrations on the grounds that he had done nothing for his country. Instead he stayed at home as usual, spending most of the day sleeping and watching television, once in a while expressing bitterness towards his surroundings. Sometimes he blamed the whole society, the corruption of which made it impossible to reach any goals in life without being rich or knowing the right people, and which made people act in highly amoral and reprehensible ways. 'Uzbeks are willing to do anything for money', he once told me. 'If they could see any gain in it, they would celebrate Hitler's birthday.' The 'monuments' that he used to talk about with pride, boasting about his Bukhara where more *avliyo* had been fostered than anywhere else, now seemed like a sign of the backwardness of the

region and the unwillingness of the government to allocate resources to its development: 'Bukhara is a museum', he said. 'Here are only ruins. All the money is spent on Tashkent.'

At other times Tohir blamed his father for not having managed to act successfully within the parameters of society. The father Mahmud had also been unemployed for some years. In 1999 the family spent all their savings to send him to Vladivostok, where Feruza's brother lived, because they heard that it was fairly easy to get a job there, and because they hoped that he could raise money for Tohir's future wedding. Mahmud went together with a friend, a craftsman. The friend quickly got a job, but Mahmud had to give up after two months, having spent all the money. He returned with nothing more than some photos (of bad quality, Tohir remarked) from the wedding of Feruza's brother's son.

Father and son being unemployed, the burden of providing for the family was thus placed on the shoulders of Feruza, who worked as an engineer, and her daughter Lola, who had a well-paid job in a foreign organization. Feruza sometimes commented on this inversion of traditional gender roles with the ironical remark that Lola should have been her son and Tohir her daughter: then they could have just married Tohir off. She herself struggled with the double role – or burden – of at the same time having engaged in wage labour and yet continuing to bear the bulk of responsibility for domestic duties that has been characteristic of women's position in Soviet Central Asia (Michaels 1998), as indeed in the rest of the Soviet Union (Buckley 1997) and elsewhere in the modern world. And although she liked her job, when the workload in and outside the home became too heavy, she told stories about the life of her grandmother with bitterness in her voice. Her grandmother had come of age during the days of Sayid Olimxon, the last emir of Bukhara. Feruza described how women at that time did not have to work at all; all they had to do was to look after the children and take care of the house. They never had to go outside. If they needed water, for example, they would just place a container outside the entrance to the house, and when a man passed by, he would fill it. Not like men nowadays. Mahmud usually reacted to Feruza's stories by going outside to have a cigarette.

Their problems notwithstanding, the family tried to keep up appearances as much as possible in relation to the outside world. In reality, they were afraid of facing people in the *mahalla*, because they felt that people there were picking on them and gossiping. 'Gossiping is the Uzbek national sport', Lola once remarked sarcastically. Although in principle they believed that the *mahalla* was a good institution in that it ensured that nobody was left alone with their problems, the dark side of the *mahalla* – composed of gossip, petty-mindedness and social control – was most often in focus when they discussed things around the kitchen table. Everywhere, on the rickety benches outside the staircases, and on the rusty playground equipment that was most often used to clean carpets of dust, sand and dirt *and* to exchange gossip, they would be met with questions about whether Tohir had got a job, when the marriage *to'y* would be, how many guests would be invited, and how many bottles of vodka would be bought for the occasion. Everybody expected a big and conspicuous *to'y* for the whole

mahalla as Tohir was the only son in the family, but the family could not afford to invite the whole *mahalla*. 'Let's have the *to'y* in the cotton picking season, then everybody will be too busy to come!' they would joke in moments when the survival mechanism of black humour took over, transforming tragedy for a short moment, by way of a perspective that revealed this whole *to'y* business to be more a performance than the suffocating social imperative it usually appeared to them.

Most of the time, however, things were hard to bear, and hard to see in perspective. It was as if all relations that were supposed to be characterized by solidarity and mutual help, such as the relations between themselves and their neighbours or the perceived patron–client relations between Tohir and his former bosses, had suddenly been filled with malicious pleasure and envy. The family felt themselves at the mercy of circumstances largely outside their control, overwhelmed by external forces that they were powerless to understand and withstand. To a certain extent they had lost their social competence. They felt unable to understand and predict the words and actions of others, including people with whom they had formerly had a good rapport. They experienced a fragmentation of their lifeworld, an alienation from the surrounding social world.

Tohir vacillated between being paralysed, withdrawing into himself, pinning his hope on utopian scenarios – something like finding (with my help) a 'sponsor' in England or Germany, earning a lot of money there and returning in a fancy car that would stun all the people who had formerly behaved badly toward him – and once in a while cautiously confronting the world outside through some kind of reactive, tactical agency (cf. Certeau 1988; Desjarlais 1996a and 1996b). Lacking the power to set his own agenda, he resorted to various 'tricks'; to tactical, rhetorical, opportunist uses of the language of power – even though this was the form of agency he decried in others, comparing it with an ideal of sincerity and frankness. When his neighbours or other people asked him if he would soon start working, and if his wedding *to'y* would soon be held, he would answer in the affirmative, boasting that his *to'y* would be so spectacular that the *mahalla* had never seen the like. And in a desperate attempt to change the minds of his former employers he one day put on his finest clothes, bought a fancy and very expensive cake, and took it to his former place of work. When Tohir returned home, he was still carrying the cake under his arm. His former employers had refused to accept it, thus also refusing the social bond the acceptance of it would create between them and Tohir. For a while it stood on the kitchen table – formerly a sign of hope, now a sign of humiliation – until Feruza cut through the thick atmosphere of shame by declaring that if these crap-eating donkeys would not eat the cake, they would do it themselves, and started cutting it into big pieces.

The evil eye and social paranoia

In this period, Feruza, Tohir and Lola started their mornings by taking tranquillizers as well as medicine for heart and stomach problems that tended to worsen in times of stress. They talked a lot about the stress connected with the feeling of

not being able to trust anyone these days, of not being able to predict the moves of their fellow human beings. Social paranoia, one might call it; but that was not what they called it. They started talking about how the evil eye[2] was causing problems to hail down on them. 'The evil eye', Lola explained to me,

> that is, for example, when people say something nice about your home, or when they say that they are glad that you are well. You never know what hides behind these words, you never know if envy or evil intentions hide behind them. The evil eye causes accidents and destruction.

As some strange events started adding to the more general and long-lasting problems – such as when Feruza one evening suddenly fell on the street outside the house and hit her head, leg and arms, and when Tohir was suddenly stricken by a horrible toothache – the family started taking more serious precautions against the evil eye. Feruza bought some wild rye at the bazaar. She would set it on fire on a small plate, which she would then carry around in the apartment, spreading the smoke and making the family members inhale it while declaiming a verse she had learned from her parents:

> *Hazorispan, hazordona*,
> the evil eye from relatives, friends,
> neighbours and those around,
> [bring it] far away from this house.[3]

Lola and Feruza would also wear small amulets in the shape of black and white *ko'zmunchok* pearls, known to be able to ward off the evil eye and sold everywhere in the bazaars and at larger shrines.[4]

As Lola's remarks about the evil eye indicate, it refers to the evil and destructive power of a hateful or envious glance towards other people or their possessions.[5] The evil power of such a glance can cause illness, accidents, death, loss or destruction of belongings or just general misfortune. References to the idea of the evil eye are both historically and geographically widespread[6] and are found all over Central Asia. There are certainly Uzbeks, especially Uzbeks who take pride in their Soviet rationalistic educational background, who regard the idea as nonsense and superstition. I have, however, witnessed even people who normally take this stance expressing worries about the phenomenon and taking measures against it in situations where they, like the family here, felt at the mercy of circumstances largely outside their control. The knowledge one lives by is not necessarily identical to the knowledge through which one reflects on and explains events in retrospect. Intellectual rejection of the assumptions underlying beliefs or practices does not necessarily exclude participating engagement in them in certain situations and the experience of them as effective in some sense (cf. Jackson 1989: 63–6 and 1996: 2).

A notable feature of the evil eye is its unpredictability, the fact that its power can be transmitted by anyone at any time. It can even be transmitted involuntarily,

as when a person is more or less unconscious of the envy behind his or her praise of or compliments to someone (cf. Snesarev 1970–1: 341). Therefore, it can be very difficult to guard against it.

Certain situations, however, are thought to be specifically vulnerable to the evil eye. I myself was often told that I should make sure to take precautions against the evil eye. As a traveller far away from my home, family and countrymen, I was considered fundamentally vulnerable. Occasions and periods characterized by uprooting, transition and change are generally speaking thought to be vulnerable to the influence of the evil eye. Various protective measures against them are thus normal features of most rites of passage. During the first day of the wedding ceremony, for example, the bridegroom arrives at the home of the bride surrounded by his close friends who protect him from evil gazes, while he himself ducks down and hides his face. His friends also carry torches, which are equally seen as a protection against the evil eye.

Furthermore, anyone who is blessed with wealth, beauty, social position or any other enviable characteristic is likely to attract the evil eye. Another reason I was warned against the evil eye was thus the fact that as a Westerner I was typically considered a representative of a part of the world flowing with wealth and opportunities, and as such an almost natural target of envy. Children are also considered fundamentally vulnerable to the evil eye.

People are usually unaware that they are the targets of the evil eye until certain signs or symptoms appear. Then they may attempt to ward off the evil eye themselves, or to cure the symptoms, or they may consult a specialist such as a *mullah*, *domlo* or *tabib* (traditional healer). Ways of warding off the evil eye and treating afflicted persons in Uzbekistan include the use of Qur'anic citations, amulets,[7] prayers, and formulas, the burning of wild rye, the lighting of fire, gestures and not least seeking help from *avliyo*, some of which are thought to be specifically helpful in this regard.

Like the phenomenon of witchcraft (cf. Favret-Saada 1980), the evil eye has to do with extraordinarily repeated misfortunes, specifically, a series of misfortunes. Tohir's family took medicine for their physical symptoms, and they tried to encourage Tohir to look for new job opportunities and to improve his English skills. In doing so, however, they only treated the immediate causes and not the origin of their troubles. I repeatedly discussed the matter with Feruza and Lola. It bothered me that Tohir always insisted on talking to me in Uzbek instead of practising his English and thereby, perhaps, improving his job opportunities. It irritated me that he always blamed his surroundings for his misfortune while doing nothing himself to improve his situation, except for waiting for an imaginary 'sponsor' from the West to rescue him. Although Feruza often herself blamed Tohir for being lazy, she found my suggestions that her son was irresponsible slightly insulting. She held on to the position that Tohir could not do much to change his situation anyway as long as someone wished him evil. For addressing the true origin of their troubles – the evil eye – neither medicine nor English lessons were effective.

For Tohir and his family, the concept of the evil eye thus served as a device

to cope with a lifeworld that seemed more and more chaotic and uncertain. The concept helped them to explain and cope with idiosyncratic experiences of moral and social transgressions. The phenomenon of the evil eye embodies an inversion of ideas about ideal social behaviour. For Tohir and his family the evil eye manifested itself in the sudden transformation of taken-for-granted relations of solidarity, mutual help and openness into relations characterized by selfishness, distrust and unpredictability. The social relations which used to be a source of strength in their life had now become a source of weakness. Existing as a possibility in all such relations and expressions of solidarity, intimacy and good intentions, the phenomenon of the evil eye embodies the experience of such relations and expressions not necessarily being what they seem to be, the experience of a fundamental opaqueness of, and unpredictability in, social relations. It destroys any all-too-simple distinction between 'us' and 'them', 'self' and 'other'. A person who suspects that he or she is struck by the evil eye thus stops taking any relation for granted and instead subjects it to reflection.

Coping with the evil eye

Feruza at some point went to a Roma woman to ask her why they were having so many problems with Tohir and if there were any chances that his situation would improve. She was ashamed about consulting the Roma, and especially about asking questions about the future, as the future was something only God knew about, and something which one should not occupy oneself with. Actually she was not really sure whether she believed the woman or not, but in order to be able to act at all, she needed something she could fasten some kind of hope to, and so she asked for the woman's advice.

The Roma woman confirmed Feruza's suspicions that there was someone spreading evil gossip about Tohir at his workplace, sending him the evil eye. She told Feruza that his situation would certainly improve and advised her to donate money to various *avliyo* and to bring some water from sources near their shrines and pour it on the threshold to the apartment. After this, Mahmud started his mornings by getting water from the nearby Pir Dastgir shrine which they poured on the threshold. Lola one day handed me a 100 *so'm* note and asked me to donate it to the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine that she knew I had planned to visit that day, and get the *domlo* there to say a prayer for Tohir. On another day Feruza went to the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine herself, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, pinning her hopes on the transcendental agency of God and his *avliyo*. Tohir had refused to go himself, as he believed that people would know that he was in trouble if he went to pay *ziyorat*. Feruza told me about her *ziyorat* upon her return. As I asked her why she had chosen Bahouddin Naqshband and his mother, she told me that Bahouddin, apart from being Bukhara's greatest *avliyo*, was known for his appreciation of honest work, as the saying *Dil ba yoru dast ba kor* (The heart with God, the hand at work) attributed to him indicates. And as Tohir was in need of a job, this was definitely the place to go. Later that day she herself returned to the theme, as if it had been haunting

her mind for some time, telling me that Bahouddin Naqshband was a man who knew that power and money were of no importance, that these things did not matter to God. *Dil ba yor* (The heart with God), she said, meant that your heart should be filled with God, and not with money or things. Bahouddin was aware of that – not like people nowadays, who were only occupied with power and money, and who had forgotten everything about God, not even being aware of the darkness that filled their hearts.

In the evening I often sat with Feruza at the family's kitchen table or on their balcony and discussed things over a cup of tea. She talked a lot about the hidden evil intentions she encountered in people around her, about the evil eye, and used this theme as a point of departure for general consideration about morality: about the moral state of society, about the general nature of good and evil, and about the moral dilemmas she herself experienced these days.

She found it hard to believe that people could be as evil as she had experienced people to be lately. Looking back, she could not point to any other period in which people had been nearly as selfish and focused on money and dead things as she found them to be now. More than once she asked me whether there were just as many evil people where I came from, whether people in Denmark behaved as badly toward each other as they did here. I answered reluctantly, finding it difficult to compare. She brushed aside my suggestion that the hardship experienced by most Uzbeks might be to blame for their difficulties in living up to moral ideals. 'It is not because of hardship, Maria,' she said,

> Things are difficult for everybody, but everybody is not evil. There are people who do nothing but good things for others, even though they cannot even afford a piece of bread. Just look at the *avliyo*. Where they are buried, a pole has been raised with a hand on the top.[8] The hand means that we all leave this world empty-handed. The only things that remain here are your good deeds. That is what people remember you for. But there are so many bad, evil people. What do they think that people will remember them for?

She often took up this theme when I discussed Tohir's situation with her, comparing the morally perfect conduct of life of the Bukhara *avliyo* with the far from perfect behaviour of present Bukhara residents. Stories about *avliyo* were moral narratives through which she could put overwhelming and disturbing everyday experiences into perspective.

For Feruza, *avliyo* were focal points for creative experimentation with different ways of remaking a lifeworld that was moving under her feet. On the one hand they were instrumental in her own pursuit of goals relating to the economic situation and status of her family in the *mahalla*. On the other hand, they embodied a morally correct way of being-in-the-world, setting modesty, honesty and empathy above the pursuit and display of money and social status. They represented a moral ideal which ought to be realized in this world and which put the moral shortcomings of her fellow countrymen into perspective. As a point of departure, then, I will define *ziyorat* as movement in physical or spiritual space

towards embodiments of the divine as a force to be exploited, and/or manifestations of the divine as ideals to be realized in this world.

Occasions of *ziyorat*

Some Uzbeks consider the performance of *ziyorat* to local shrines to be a duty for Muslims.[9] The wish to recover or commemorate lost knowledge also played an important role in the narratives of many of the visitors to Bukhara's shrines with whom I talked about their reasons for embarking on *ziyorat*. This wish seemingly reflected the point often made in official narratives that the Soviet years had deprived people of a proper understanding of Islam. When my field assistants and I interviewed a *domlo* about the history of a particular *avliyo*, we were usually surrounded by other visitors who listened and contributed questions themselves. What is the difference between an *avliyo* and a *payg'ambar* (prophet)? Why do the Wahhabis say that visiting the shrines of *avliyo* amounts to *shirk* (idolatry)? Is it possible to be a good Muslim and engage in business at the same time? Is it true that if one visits the Seven *Pirs* of Bukhara in one day, one will have any wish granted? Who was this particular *avliyo* actually? How come you experience such unusual feelings when visiting shrines?

People, however, seldom pay *ziyorat* solely in order to perform a duty or recover abstract knowledge about Islam. They embark on *ziyorat* on the occasion of the socially recognized rites of passage observed at birth, circumcision, marriage and death. They also embark on *ziyorat* on the occasion of more individual situations characterized by transition and uncertainty, such as sending a son off for military service, or commencement of a new job or a new education. More often, however, they pay *ziyorat* in situations of crisis, in situations where they are unwillingly and unexpectedly stuck in an often shameful tension between their ideals and the all but perfect character of their lifeworlds, by a tension between their hopes and visions and their limited means of realizing these hopes and visions. *Ziyorat* becomes relevant in situations where they – like Feruza and her family – experience a loss of agency caused by such troubles as illness, childlessness, unrequited love, unemployment or financial troubles; or when they feel alienated from the surrounding social world, for example as the targets of the evil eye. Some visit shrines habitually, on their way to or from work, school or shopping, to pray for a good life for themselves and their loved ones, for the preservation of a life they are satisfied with, but the blessing of which they are afraid to lose in an insecure society where misfortune might be waiting, and where the evil eye might be hiding just around the corner. Some visit the shrines in order to experience a state of peace and well-being. Some do it when they have to make a difficult decision, hoping for help to make the right choice. Some deliberately seek out a 'liminoid'[10] point of view which allows them to take a reflexive glance at their existence, to see it in perspective and evaluate it according to the ideals perceived to be embodied, or symbolized, by the place in question. In all these situations, the forthcoming of the world is transformed into a horizon of possibilities and some kind of integrity is sought.

Listening to visitors' accounts of the motives behind their visits, or following the social dramas which are their occasion, one gets an impression of which areas of life are of great concern to people in Uzbekistan, and about which they often feel uncertain and powerless. As already mentioned, my field assistant Baxtiyor, who spent a lot of time with me visiting shrines, had difficulty hiding the boredom he felt with the banality of the problems visitors brought there. Once in a while, however, he would leave the state of boredom and indifference and burst out in indignant comments on the priorities in life among people that were reflected in the stories we heard at the shrines. People were egoists, he said, not able to see beyond the end of their own noses. They were only interested in money, power, new clothes, big homes and things like that – and they were stupid enough to think that they could get all this just by touching a dead man's tomb. Once he told me about an incident he overheard while paying *ziyorat* to the shrine of Said Ahmad Pobandi Kushod with his mother. A woman came and asked the elderly *domlo* there if he could see into her future and tell whether she would get rid of her debt. The *domlo* started crying and cursing her, saying that only God could see into the future, and that she ought to worry more about her afterlife than her debt. Then he sent her away.

Most *domlo*s certainly do not curse people for expressing the wrong wishes while paying *ziyorat*. Still, I experienced it as a very common complaint among *domlo*s working at shrines that people were too concerned with the this-worldly pursuit of money, power and all sorts of commodities and material things, and that they had forgotten God. People, they said, were increasingly seeking the help of *avliyo* in financial matters, and praised *avliyo* who were known to have performed financial miracles, forgetting that financial matters are meaningless in the light of the eternal. They contrasted the worldly pursuits and materialism perceived to characterize present-day people with the morally perfect lives of the *avliyo*, a contrast which they conveyed through lively hagiographic narratives that most visitors would listen to with great interest. As Vernon Schubel (Schubel 1999) has pointed out, ordinary Muslims become aware of the moral and spiritual teachings of the *avliyo* through such stories. Beliefs and attitudes are instilled in an existential rather than purely cognitive and didactic manner (ibid.: 73).[11]

The denunciation of materialism so commonly attributed to *avliyo* is also, in the opinion of many, symbolized by the image of a hand placed on the *tug'* (pole) which usually marks the tombs of saints.[12] The symbolism is linked to Alexander the Great, who is a great legendary figure in Central Asia,[13] as in other parts of the world. The story goes that Alexander, when he sensed that his death was near, told people around him to bury him with an empty hand on his grave as a symbol that although he had conquered the world, he left it empty-handed, carrying nothing with him to the next life.

The same *domlo*s who occasionally expressed a kind of moral panic relating to the priorities of their fellow human beings – priorities that they seemed to regard as insults to the symbolism of Alexander's hand and to the moral and spiritual teachings of the *avliyo* – would at the same time also routinely meet

visitors with promises that all of their wishes would come true if they paid *ziyorat*, and told visitors miracle stories about poor people winning in the lottery, childless women becoming pregnant, people recovering from serious illness, businessmen having success in their deals, and the like: worldly tragedies, not made meaningless in the light of the eternal, but being transformed into equally worldly miracle stories by the intervention of the divine, and connecting worldly pursuits with some kind of divine blessedness.

Recreating illusio

Such ambivalence surrounding the relation between 'magical' instrumental engagement, which reflected everyday concerns, and abstracted moral reasoning, which put these concerns into perspective, was indeed characteristic of the way shrines mattered to most people I encountered during my fieldwork, just as it was for Feruza. Shrines were focal points for creative experimentation with different ways of remaking and re-imagining lifeworlds, for reflection on, negotiation of and practical experimentation with which parts of reality were worth engaging in.

More specifically, I will suggest, shrines are focal points for recreating illusio: that is, what gives meaning and direction to existence and what makes certain parts of reality worth engaging in (cf. Chapter 1). People in post-Soviet Bukhara typically seek out sacred places when the correspondence between illusio and lusiones is broken or threatened, when the social world is different from the one to which they are adjusted and their sense of the game fails. Shrines can be considered as focal points for recreating illusio in the sense that they are perceived as sources of unlimited power to invest in social fields as arenas for agency to constitute and articulate and for 'magical' attempts to restore a correspondence between illusio and lusiones – and as sources of imaginative potential for evaluating the game itself, questioning its illusio, imagining other games within which to constitute and articulate one's agency; other larger spheres of Being to be integrated with.[14]

Tohir's upbringing had disposed him to share the illusio that masculinity, the art of being a man, is inextricably bound up with the ability to act successfully in the public sphere, thereby being able to provide for one's family as well as to serve the nation and God. Because he shared this illusio, he was particularly committed to acting successfully in the public sphere, and his efforts at doing so were particularly involving and affecting. He was so passionately engaged in this illusion of masculinity that his failed performance amounted to an existential crisis. When his sense of the game failed and he suddenly and unexpectedly found himself displaced to its margins, he started wavering between desperately using any means at hand trying to recreate his former foothold in it and feeling disillusion. In moments of disillusion, Tohir felt the game less intensely; indeed, he began to see it as a social 'game', the participants in which were willing to compromise their moral standards in their pursuit of the stakes of money, power and prestige, while still hypocritically couching their acts in rhetoric centred

around the value of serving one's country and serving God. In other words, the social world in which he had formerly been immersed now often seemed like a theatre stage with unconvincing actors. Conceptualizing the forces that obstructed his efforts to live up to ideal male gender identity as forces of evil was a way for Tohir to save face: were he not good at being a man, he was at least a good man.[15]

As mentioned in Chapter 1, for people to commit themselves to a particular reality, to share its illusio, they have to feel a balance between active and passive modes of being. The fact that Tohir had previously committed himself to his internship in the state administration, sharing an illusio that linked a career there with successful masculine performance as well as service to the nation and to God, was linked to the fact that this part of social reality provided him with a sense of agency in a sphere of greater Being that had been active in shaping what he was, and what he was indeed proud of being: a man, God's creature and an Uzbek citizen. Confronted with Tohir's failed performance, Feruza wavered between two strategies, through both of which she sought to recreate a balance between acting and being acted upon: on the one hand she sought powers in sacred space which would recreate Tohir's – or, rather, the whole family's – agency and improve their chances in social games where money and social status and identity were at stake. Here she perceived the evil eye that struck the family as a mere obstacle to their performance in these games. On the other hand, sometimes she perceived the evil eye as a symptom of the fundamentally evil nature of these social games and disengaged herself from them by way of moral narratives that put them into perspective, that made her able to see them from another vantage point and helped her imagine an alternative sphere of greater Being to belong to and experience agency within. Storytelling, according to Michael Jackson, can be a way of sustaining or (re)capturing a sense of agency in disempowering circumstances. It is usually triggered by 'some crisis, stalemate or loss of ground in a person's relationship with others and with the world, such that autonomy is undermined, recognition withheld, and action made impossible' (Jackson 2002: 18). When events are represented in a story, one does no longer live these events in passivity, being at their mercy, one gets a grasp on them:

> storytelling reworks and remodels subject–object relations in ways that subtly alters the balance between actor and acted upon, thus allowing us to feel that we actively participate in a world that for a moment seemed to discount, demean, and disempower us.
>
> (Jackson 2002: 16)

Storytelling effects a transformation that symbolically switches the locus of action from one context of relationship to another (ibid.: 18). Feruza's moral narratives symbolically switched the locus of her actions from a context in which they did not seem to make a difference to another one in which they mattered a great deal: to the ultimate game, set up by God, in which the stakes are

one's fate in the afterlife; in which there is something to fasten hope to; in which injustices will be made up for; in which goodness will pay off; in which amoral acts will have repercussions; and in the perspective of which evil is transformed into something almost comical – in the perspective of which, for example, the people inflicting pain become 'crap-eating donkeys'.

A phenomenology of *avliyo* in post-Soviet Bukhara

I sometimes asked people what characterizes or defines *avliyo* in general terms. Most often I had little success. Those with sceptical views of the practices of the veneration of saints so common among their countrymen, ventured into longer abstracted reflections about how the *avliyo* should be properly understood, giving quasi-sociological explanations that presented them as extraordinarily pious human beings to whom miraculous powers had been wrongly attributed, or as charlatans exploiting the naivety of common people. But most people – if they did not resort to nationalist rhetoric, talking about 'our nation's great ancestors' or the like – would only give me somewhat vague and brief answers, like 'I don't know . . . they were very good, very bright', or '*Avliyo* have great powers' – sometimes making excuses with remarks about 'The 70 Soviet years' and the ignorance about Islam they had caused. Or they would say 'Only God knows' or the like, with a finality that seemed to suggest that there was nothing more to be said, and nothing more to be known.

The logic of practice (cf. Bourdieu 1990) does not necessarily need any abstract-theoretical grounding. Most people, in their daily engagement with the world, do not usually occupy themselves with more abstract questions about how and why things work as long as they work, and as long as they are not met by the questions of an anthropologist stubbornly seeking some kind of theoretical or theological grounding for their practice, some deeper meaning behind it. Anyway, this vagueness and brevity struck me at first as a strange contrast to the most often colourful and dramatic narratives told by the same people, in which the practice of *ziyorat* commonly figured as a source of unlimited power to change the course of lives and unlimited potential to imagine them differently; where the morally perfect lives of *avliyo* were held up as a mirror in which all kinds of agency were evaluated and put into perspective. This vagueness was also a contrast to the more formal hagiographic narratives which told of the moral and spiritual teachings of the *avliyo* and which people seemed to take great interest in when they were told at shrines. But on second thoughts it seems to me that it was precisely the relative openness and indeterminacy in the conception of *avliyo* – whether perceived to relate to a shameful ignorance resulting from a definite historical period, or alternatively to an ignorance that was an inescapable fact of the very human condition – that gave them their strong imaginative potential, that gave them such a strong hold on people's imagination. Far from being overdetermined by nationalist discourse, far from being frozen as symbols of the nation's great past, in semiological terms they could rather be characterized as signs with a surplus of the signifier. Neither

embodied in present – all too human – human beings, nor defined unambiguously in – all too human – human language, they were capable of playing virtually unlimited roles in the most diverse stories characterized by the most diverse concerns, while at the same time representing an essential, unchanging moral order.

Avliyo can be perceived as embodiments, or allegories, of everything perceived to be missing in intersubjective encounters. *Avliyo*, to those Bukhara Muslims who sought them out, embodied the fulfilment of both the desire for agency and the desire for existence within a larger sphere of Being which has been active in shaping them. On the one hand they embodied absolute power and knowledge, absolute autonomy and agency. They possessed power to intervene in the lives of others radically, imposing their will on these lives. On the other hand, they embodied what might be termed an absolute passivity or sociality; that is, a sacrificing of self or subjectivity for the sake of the social. They embodied the totalitarian personality and the masochistic personality at the same time. Or, to be more precise, when people felt the social to be suffocating, leaving no room for agency, what they sought in the phenomenon of *avliyo* was power to act on the world or knowledge to imagine the social in a different way: that is, in a way that symbolically switched the locus of action from a context in which it did not seem to make a difference to a context in which it mattered. When they, on the other hand, experienced agency and autonomy but found themselves on the margins of the social world they belonged to or identified with, what they sought and accentuated in the phenomenon of *avliyo* was a moral foundation of agency or knowledge to imagine subjectivity differently: that is, in a way which symbolically transferred the constitution of one's subjectivity from a sphere of Being one felt alienated from to a sphere of Being where it could be integrated.

Ontologies of sacred space

Not only was the ontological status of shrines a matter for strong disagreement and intense discussion whenever I put forward the subject matter, most of the Muslims I knew in Uzbekistan were themselves ambivalent about the ontological status of the shrines. They were ambivalent about whether shrines were merely symbols or traces of a divine presence in the world and the ideals attained by the saint, or whether they embodied the divine in its essence concretely, and thus were endowed with some kind of contagious blessedness which could not be perceived by ordinary human reason but which could only be properly experienced by the reason of the heart.

On the one hand, people expressed the belief that place is not a matter of importance, as God is everywhere and can be praised everywhere, and as the most important thing in order for one's prayers to be met is *ishon* (belief) and a clean heart or soul: if you do not have belief, and if your heart is impure, you can pay *ziyorat* 1,000 times, you can go on *Hajj* 1,000 times; that will not help you. People derided Soviet officials for thinking that they could get rid of Islam

by destroying mosques and shrines, as if Islam were embodied in the stones these places were made of and not in the hearts and minds of people, as if the power of God did not transcend its manifestations. Although they approved of the post-Soviet government's efforts to restore such places, they also pointed out that more was needed to restore people's knowledge of Islam from oblivion. They emphasized what is also written on posters at many shrines: that it amounts to *shirk* (idolatry) to 'touch the stones' – that is, to touch the shrine believing that it has magical powers – and they also decried the common practice of placing small symbolic votive offerings in the form of sewing thread and pieces of cloth in trees in the vicinity of shrines as an expression of irrational 'magical' thinking. They pointed out that if the place is special, it is more as a trigger of reflexivity that reminds one to view one's life in the light of death and the afterlife, and inspires one to imitate the morally perfect lives of the saints, realizing ancient ideals in the present. 'It is better to realize what we have said than to pay *ziyorat* to our graves.' This saying attributed to Bahouddin Naqshband was quoted to me by Erkin, a Naqshbandi who worried about the tendency to 'touch the stones' that he perceived as widespread among his countrymen. He also quoted a verse attributed to Bahouddin Naqshband which is written above the *khanaqah* at his shrine complex:

> How long are you going to waste your life, hey silly man,
> by visiting the graves of dead people.
> One cat which is alive is better
> for God than a hundred lions.[16]

Like many others, Erkin attributed the 'bad habit' of touching the stones, visiting the graves of dead people, to a widespread ignorance of the true nature of Islam due to the 70 years of Soviet rule. However, in times of difficulty he had been 'drawn' to various shrines by some kind of 'force' and had experienced 'things happen' there that he could not explain. He knew that it was wrong to 'touch the stones', but nevertheless he felt that there *was* something about the shrines, some quality, a 'force' that made a difference.

This ambivalence was present in most people's relationship with the shrines. Even those who spoke about it as *shirk* often found it difficult to resist a temptation to 'touch the stones', to embrace the shrine in all its physicality. My field assistant Baxtiyor often emphasized to me that Islam was 'the religion of abstraction', as he termed it, and asked me not to write anything in my thesis about the fact that people 'touch the stones' because he would find it embarrassing. On the other hand, he could not help touching them himself: at the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine complex are the remnants of an old mulberry tree. The legend goes that the tree stems from a walking stick that Bahouddin was presented with once when he was on *Hajj*. On coming back to Qashri Orifon, Bahouddin thrust the stick into the ground, and out of it grew a mulberry tree. Hundreds of years later, a storm brought down the tree, which bled when it fell to the ground. Now, it is considered sacred by many; it is considered a source of

power, or *baraka* (blessing power). Each time Baxtiyor and I passed the tree, he started trying to pick out a splinter from it which he intended to make an amulet out of, while on our way home he lamented people's superstitious habits of 'worshipping stones'. When I confronted him with the ambiguity, he told me that he knew it was wrong, but that it was as if some irresistible 'force' made him do it. In the same vein, he explained the fact that he had been admitted to the university with the best results in his year after having visited Bukhara's Seven *Pir*s as some kind of 'mystery' that one could not, and should indeed not try to, explain.

Those same people who derided Soviet officials for thinking that they could get rid of Islam by destroying mosques and shrines also sometimes took the continuing miserable condition of many shrines as an indication of the miserable state of people's knowledge of Islam, or pointed to the fact that not all shrines were completely destroyed as evidence that they were indeed endowed with a transcendent force capable of standing up against any human attempts at destruction, and against the decay that generally affects everything human. They told stories about Soviet officials trying to destroy shrines, who had been met by accidents, illness – notably paralysis – or death, or who had been forced to give up their enterprise. The *domlo* at the Pir Dastgir shrine told me that once back in the Soviet period, there had been some construction work going on at the place. Suddenly the workers struck something hard in the sand. They tried to destroy it, but they could not. The bulldozers suddenly stopped, and a worker could not move his legs. Later, they found out that a mosque was buried in the sand. 'Islam can never be destroyed', he concluded. Or take Muazzam, an elderly woman, who told me about how she visited Bukhara's Seven *Pir*s back in the 1980s together with some friends. They came to one of the shrines, but there was nothing to see, and so she did not believe that there could be an *avliyo* there. Then she was suddenly lifted about 20 centimetres above the ground. She was very scared. That, she said, was a sign from God that she should trust her heart more than her eyes.

People told me stories about post-independence rebuilding of shrines whose plots were also about the indestructibility of Islam, and which linked their own life stories with this master narrative: like the *domlo* at the Pir Dastgir shrine who told me about the failed efforts of the Soviet bulldozers to destroy the place, and who had been in charge of rebuilding it himself: 'The goal of my life', he called it and told me how grateful he was to have been able to devote so much time and energy to this project, the visible results of which he was now able to enjoy every day. Others told me stories about whole communities working together to rebuild a shrine: for example the *domlo* at the shrine of Xoja Mahmud Anjir Fag'naviy (one of Bukhara's Seven *Pir*s) told me about how some people came with stones and bricks, how the man in the neighbouring house installed gas, and how her husband brought an engraved stone which was put on the tomb (he had made the promise that if he went on *Hajj*, he would buy it and put it there). Another story described the shrine of Said Ahmad Pobandi Kushod, which had been used as some kind of sports administration building in Soviet days and which was later destroyed because there were rumours that there was gold to be found in there. What was left of the shrine would have been

torn down if the *domlo* there – an old man without family – had not taken the initiative to collect money in the neighbourhood for the refurbishing of the place and contributed the money he had saved for his own funeral.

I also frequently heard people who lamented the practice of 'touching stones' express the hope that at least some sand from the newly restored shrine complex of the great *Hadith* collector Imom al-Buxoriy, which is situated close to Samarkand, would be brought to Bukhara so that his fellow townsmen might pay *ziyorat* to him properly.

Gulchehra Navro'zova, professor of philosophy at Bukhara's technical university (cf. Chapter 3) has wondered a lot about the attractive force of the shrines. She explained it to me tentatively, saying that

> Human beings consist of body and spirit [. . .] When [*avliyo*] die, the earth in their body becomes earth, the water becomes water, the air becomes air. And at that place, the body of the *avliyo* has influence on the trees and flowers that grow there, on the constituent parts of the air and the water. Therefore, if you visit these places . . . if you for example go to Bahouddin, Imom Xoja Baror, Pir Dastgir, the water is, of course, very beneficial. And the earth . . . like when you pray . . . like that, the earth will bring you good health. When people go there and sit down, they feel light [. . .] People do not understand the meaning, why, but they come, because they feel light when they come, and therefore they call it a holy place.

Unlike Dr Navro'zova, most people with whom I discussed the issue were not particularly eager to explain the special quality of the shrines – by some referred to as the *baraka* (blessing power) or the *nur* (radiating light) of the saint, but more often described with such mundane terms as *quvvat*, *kuch* and *qudratr*, all meaning 'power', 'strength' – in abstract terms. Rather, they sought to depict the quality of shrines to me by describing what they did: they talked about certain feelings experienced at shrines – they felt light; they felt warm; they felt dizzy; they felt some kind of energy filling their bodies, or they felt something they were unable to express in words. They made use of metaphors such as 'it opens your way', 'it breaks the chains', 'it lifts the burden' – images of being physically stuck or weighted down and set free that conveyed a strong sense of the loss of agency that is the occasion for many shrine pilgrimages, and the recapturing of a sense of agency that can be their result. These images contrasted with the stories of immediate divine punishment hitting evil-doers which were also often told. In these stories evil-doers – Soviet official trying to destroy shrines, businessmen using dirty tricks, megalomaniac rulers overestimating the importance of worldly power or *mullah*s refusing to help other people with their prayers – often received immediate divine punishment in the form of 'paralysis' – immobility or speechlessness – that is, what might be an experiential prototype of the sense of loss of agency.[17]

People also elaborated more concrete narratives about tragic lives, the deadlocks of which had been miraculously solved after a visit to a shrine. And they

classified shrines for me according to the more specific problems and predicaments that many of them were reputed to be 'specialized' in solving or remedying. When asking me about my visits to the shrines, they usually questioned me about how I felt there, and whether I had experienced anything unusual in my life afterwards. If I denied that I had felt or experienced anything in particular, they told me that next time I should pay more attention to my feelings and to subsequent unusual events around me. Furthermore, they spoke of their decisions to visit shrines in terms of desire and attraction, saying that they 'wanted' to visit them, that they 'needed to' visit them, that they 'had to' visit them or that they were 'drawn' to them. 'It is in our hearts, it is in our nature', as an old *domlo* said. In other words, they used tropes of emotion that represented the attractive force of shrines not as something inherently irrational, but rather as lying outside the grasp of ordinary human reason and control, and approachable only through more bodily or sensual ways of perceiving the world. The very fact that the forces which 'drew' people to the shrines, and the experiences they had there were scarcely explicable, only testified to their divine origin. And if there were people among their countrymen who were not able to perceive the force of the shrines, this was because of the '70 Soviet years' and the darkness they had created in their hearts and the amnesia they had caused.

The way most people wavered in their perception of the ontological status of the shrines and of sacred space more generally might be characterized as a wavering between the two fundamental modes of relating to the world which Stanley Tambiah (1990) has conceptualized with his distinction between 'participation' and 'causality' (cf. Chapter 1). This ambiguity does not reflect some kind of logical confusion; rather, it reflects the different context of social use. What is interesting in the case of sacred space is the question of which situations lead people to devalue and condemn 'participatory' engagement with shrines as irrational, and when on the contrary they grant great value to 'participatory' experiences of the forces at work at shrines as experiences of the forces of the divine. Experiences not granted to everyone: not granted to people like me, who did not pay enough attention to the channels through which the forces of the divine expressed themselves, and not granted to people whose hearts had been covered in darkness during 'the 70 Soviet years'.

Let us return to Shoira, whom we met in Chapter 4. Like most other people she alternated between conceiving sacred places – shrines visible in the physical landscape as well as shrines temporarily created in spiritual dream-space – as concretely embodying the divine as a beneficial force on the one hand, and as symbolically manifesting an ideal to be realized on the other. Sometimes she condemned people's participatory engagement with shrines as not only irrational – that is, resting on a belief in the agency of stones – but also amoral, in the light of the morally dubious concerns that people articulated on such occasions (chasing worldly stakes – power, richness etc. – that did not matter at all to God). The miracle narratives she often told, however, testified to just such a participatory engagement with sacred space; that is, to the idea that it was endowed with some kind of transcendent, inscrutable force that held together her fragile

life, but which she was in no position to control or predict. They thus lend transcendent authority to her way of leading her life – a way that others found amoral.

Everyday Islam to most people in post-Soviet Bukhara is neither a 'religion of abstraction', to quote my field assistant Baxtiyor, nor a religion of participatory, emotional engagement with sacred space: it is both. That people waver in their conceptions of the ontology of sacred space should not, I contend, be interpreted in terms of logical contradictions in their world views. Nor should it be seen as an indicator of a 'lack of knowledge' of Islam resulting from the 70 years of Soviet rule and atheist propaganda. Knowing is related to doing; it resides in practice. And participation and causality or abstraction, as fundamental modes of relating to the world, are played out in intersubjective encounters where it is a continuous matter of negotiation which parts of reality matter, are real and worth being implicated in. Abstracted, reflexive attempts at realizing ideals perceived to be symbolized by shrines are by the same people in turn considered rational and morally correct ways of practising Islam on the one hand and, on the other hand, signs of alienation from a proper understanding of God which can only be achieved by way of knowledge of the heart. Tropes of emotion through which participatory experiences are tentatively conveyed in words are sometimes deemed 'bad habits' or expressions of mere irrationality and sometimes taken to point toward the limits of human rational understanding and control of the course of the world; toward imaginary time horizons, taking one to past times when the alienating barrier of amnesia had not yet fallen between man and God; and lending transcendent authority and moral righteousness to acts that otherwise may be found morally suspect.

In the next chapter I shall examine another central aspect of Islam in post-Soviet Bukhara: the Naqshbandiyya Sufi *tariqa* or, more precisely, the meanings given to it by those Naqshbandi *murid*s (disciples) I met during my fieldwork. I will explore their reflections on Naqshbandiyya's teaching and its relevance to their own lifeworlds and to post-Soviet society in general. The heart or soul, to these Bukhara Naqshbandis, was a sacred place in the microcosm of the body, comparable with the shrines of the urban landscape; a place where they learned to dwell through an education of attention, and which, as such, was also a focal point for recreating illusio.

6 Journey in the homeland

After being branded as extremist and anti-Soviet during the Soviet period, the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* has been rehabilitated by the post-Soviet Uzbek government: state funding has been used to restore shrines related to Naqshbandi *avliyo* and aspects of the Naqshbandiyya teaching are elevated as representing true Uzbek 'Muslimness' as an antidote to Islamic extremism and terror. Moving beyond the common engagement with aspects of the Naqshbandiyya teaching and with Naqshbandi shrines and into the realm of social practice, however, the relationship between the post-Soviet Uzbek state and the Naqshbandis becomes more awkward: although they seek to accommodate to the social and political realities of post-Soviet society, the Naqshbandis hardly feel that true Uzbek 'Muslimness' is manifested in this society. Furthermore, they suffer on account of political measures allegedly directed at extremists whose version of Islam they can in no way identify with.

Dilfuza

I was introduced to Dilfuza for the first time in the summer of 1998. Dilfuza was a middle-aged businesswoman who made a living for herself and her family by selling clothes at the central bazaar in Bukhara. Dilfuza was also Naqshbandi. She had been a practising Muslim since she was seven years old. One of her elder relatives taught her to pray and to read the Qur'an, and to do so secretly in order to accommodate to Soviet society. The years passed; the late Gorbachev period and later the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Uzbekistan's independence in 1991 fuelled the hope among many Muslims that they would soon be able to practise their religion openly. Although Dilfuza was happy about how things were changing, she did not feel well during this period. She suffered from depression and had difficulty sleeping. In order to help her, one day her younger brother introduced her to Bobo Tesha. Bobo Tesha (d. 1997) was an old charismatic *pir* (spiritual guide) who had served his own *pir* in the mountains in the region of Kashgar Daryo for around 50 years before he came to Bukhara. Bobo Tesha made a great impression on Dilfuza. He 'opened her heart', as she termed it, and soon after their first meeting she joined the Naqshbandiyya. Since then, she said, she had slowly begun to understand the deeper meaning of the words

of the Qur'an and the rituals she had been practising since her childhood. She also recovered from her depression.

Entering Naqshbandiyya

The basic principle of a *tariqa* is the allegiance of a *murid* (disciple) to a *pir* or *shaykh* (spiritual leader) in exchange for initiation. Like Dilfuza, most of the Naqshbandi adepts I was in contact with had been introduced by way of a network of followers that developed around Bobo Tesha.[1] The Naqshbandis talked about Bobo Tesha with great awe. He was a very humble man, they told; his home was quite ordinary, and at first sight his appearance was ordinary too. But if one paid proper attention, one noticed that a light radiated from his face. He may not have possessed much of the knowledge people acquire from reading books or studying at the *madrasa*, but he had the much more rare and valuable knowledge that results from the opening of the eye of the heart, a knowledge that makes a human being capable of sensing what goes on in the hearts and minds of fellow human beings, even at a distance. Even after his death in 1997, many of Bobo Tesha's *murid*s had felt his presence in various ways. Omina, for example, told me that some time ago she had been sitting in *chilla* (prayer retreat). She was supposed to read the entire Qur'an, but she kept falling asleep. Then she invoked Bobo Tesha and asked him to help her. She felt as if someone spoke to her, encouraging her, and she gained new strength that helped her complete the reading. Then suddenly something fell from the candle she was reading by. It was a piece of wax. When she looked at it more closely, she realized that it had the shape of Bobo Tesha. Omina, like several of the Naqshbandis I talked with, believed that Bobo Tesha was in fact *avliyo*, although she was not certain about it.

The Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* is not antagonistic to the scholarly Islam of the *ulama.* The Naqshbandis I discussed the issue with were eager to point out that the *tariqa* is firmly rooted in the *shari'a* and should be considered a further development of it, a way for the seeker to get even closer to the essence of Islam. In spite of the fact that the *tariqa* in principle is considered a further development of the *shari'a*, in practice, the conditions for entering the *tariqa* in Bukhara are not very strict. The *murid*s of my acquaintance pointed out that anybody who wishes to enter the *tariqa* is accepted.

For some, entering the Naqshbandiyya is in retrospect perceived to be the natural culmination of a gradual process starting in early childhood and involving the slow realization of an inner essence. These *murid*s were usually influenced by older relatives or significant others who belonged to the Naqshbandiyya or Qadiriyya *tariqa*, knew about their teachings, were religious authorities in some other sense or who were just very pious. Such was the case with Erkin, a man in his forties. For him, the entrance into Naqshbandiyya had been the outcome of a growth in faith that had lasted most of his life. In retrospect he found the seeds of his entrance to the *tariqa* in his early childhood:

> Already when I was three, four, five years old . . . it was not my parents who gave it to me, it was my grandmother. That is, [she said] 'when you grow up, you should not smoke cigarettes; when you grow up, you should not eat sausages; when you grow up, you should not drink vodka.' When I was four or five years old she told me things like that. When I went to school I did not smoke; when I went to school I did not drink vodka with my friends; if sausage was served for me, I only ate a little bit. Muslimness was not something you expected in the fourth or fifth grade. Our friends say that I knew something back then. Today I am Muslim, I am Naqshbandi. 'You were [Muslim] too back then', they say [. . .] When I was in the fourth or fifth grade, my mother brought me to Sulayho. She was older than me. Thanks to her, I could read Arabic from the fifth grade. I met Sulayho regularly for four or five years, until the ninth grade. She taught me the Qur'an – before it was called 'the old things', today it is called Qur'an. Since the ninth grade I have been reading the Qur'an. In this time of atheism. Cigarettes, vodka, these things . . . my father smoke and drank. He did not say 'do not smoke' to me; he did not say 'do not drink' to me. But I did not have any wish to smoke or drink. It was as if something made me abstain from smoking and drinking, and it is possible that already at that time I knew that I would take this way; that I was conscious about these things [. . .] In school we were raised to believe in Marxism–Leninism, but we did not pay much attention to it. But later I studied at the Pedagogical Faculty. There was a subject called 'The history of the Communist Party'; there was a subject called 'Atheism'. I did not pay any attention to 'Atheism' [laughs] . . . When I took the exam I could not answer the questions. In all the other subjects I got [the marks] five, four, three, but in 'Atheism' I got two.[2]

As for Dilfuza, the decisive factor that made Erkin's growing faith culminate in his entrance to the Naqshbandiyya was an encounter with Bobo Tesha:

> With us in Bukhara there is a person named Tesha Bobo. Was. He was our *pir*. We were still young; we read *namoz*, but we were not in the *tariqa*, we were in *shari'a*. We started visiting Tesha Bobo and learned the *tariqa*; thank God we entered the *tariqa* [. . .] If you go [to Tesha Bobo], it makes you a different person. He told . . . with the heart . . . One moment – how should I explain this? His knowledge was not big, but through work he reached his [spiritual] level. He also took care of spiritual education. Spiritual. We participated for two or three years . . . I know for sure that I have become a different person. He did not say 'Do this and that', it just happened to us [. . .] His education was of a different kind. He was *pir* . . . yes, he had achieved the *pir* level. I do not know whether he was *avliyo*. We went with him on *Hajj* in 1994. After the *Hajj* we visited him. I was overburdened with work and was only able to find time on Mondays [. . .] I went to Tesha Bobo with four people. We four people went, sat and talked about this and that and went home. Then on another Monday we found time. That

> person, that person and that person also went [. . .] And then we asked Tesha Bobo, 'We are able to come every Monday. Does it suit you?' 'Yes, no difference, if it suits you, it does not make any difference. Come and join every Monday', he said. And after some time, two or three years after the *Hajj*, up to a hundred people would come to him.

For others, the decision to join Naqshbandiyya was perceived to be the result of sudden, revelatory experiences or the unexpected influence of forces beyond their control and normal rational understanding which had made them radically break with former ways of living. Ibrahim, for example, told me that 'my heart ordered me to enter the Naqshbandiyya. That's it.' Khursandjon was compelled to attend the Bahouddin Naqshband celebrations in 1993 by a 'sudden impulse'. At the celebrations she met Bobo Tesha, a *shaykh* from Malaysia, and a couple of other Naqshbandis who persuaded her to join the *tariqa*. Ilhom visited the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine complex a couple of days before his entrance examination to the university in 1997, and there he suddenly had an overwhelming feeling of fear of and love for God which made him join the Naqshbandiyya later. Like Dilfuza, *murid*s who explain their decision to join the *tariqa* with reference to such sudden, uncontrollable impulses often connect the entrance with situations of crisis in their lives too: situations where the illusions that used to give meaning and direction to their existence were shaken, where their normal ways of being-in-the-world were blocked, and/or where they suddenly seemed intellectually, emotionally or morally empty. Rustam, a man in his early twenties who was studying at Bukhara's technical university and who had joined the Naqshbandiyya in 1994, told this story about his entrance:

> I did not consider myself Muslim before independence . . . I did not know very much about Islam. We were communists [laughs]. We forgot much during these 70 years. I heard about the *tariqa* in 1994. I mean, I used to read some books about it, but I did not know the essence of it. The *tariqa*s had become part of our culture, I think. But we knew very little about them. And in 1994 I was going through a difficult time. At that time I had a shock in my life. And – I do not want to talk about it, but it made me think about life and . . . how to say . . . I cannot explain it, but at that time I read a book about Bahouddin Naqshband written by one of his followers. And I became interested [. . .] And later there were some students going to Turkey to study there. They came back, and one of them was my brother's friend. He became Sufi in Turkey, and he became the follower of the *shaykh* Abdul Baqi from Manzil. He introduced the *tariqa*. That was a great thing for us [. . .] That was a great thing in my life. The greatest thing and the most – I do not know how to explain this. It changed my life altogether. There was a dramatic change. I used to practise Islam before becoming Sufi, but after becoming Sufi I felt that Islam became different to me. And I realized that I had not understood the true essence of Islam before becoming Sufi.

The Naqshbandi path begins as the *murid* is given the hand by the *shaykh* or the *shaykh*'s *vakil* (representative) and is made to accept *tauba*, that is, to repent, to ask for forgiveness for all the sins he or she has committed. This is the very first stage of the path. Dilfuza remembered it as a very significant moment in her life: 'It was as if something burst inside me, I felt so light, I felt so empty, and I started to cry. From that moment I became a different person. I started to become a different person.' Having entered the path the *murid* participates in Naqshbandi *xatm*s (gatherings) led by the *shaykh* or *vakil*, which are usually held on Mondays. At these gatherings the Naqshbandis perform *zikr* (see below), read parts of the Qur'an as well as special prayers invoking the blessings of the Naqshbandiyya *silsila* (spiritual chain) and its *shaykh*s for the *murid*s. They also talk in an informal way with other Naqshbandis, and they are taught about the *tariqa* and instructed in how to behave in different situations. Most importantly, the *shaykh* or *vakil* gives the *murid* his or her personal tasks to carry out.

The relationship between the *murid* and his or her *shaykh* is the pillar of the *tariqa*. The *shaykh* is perceived to be absolutely indispensable as a guide for the *murid* on his or her way along the path to God as he knows the path better than the *murid*. The more specific tasks given to the *murid* differ from *shaykh* to *shaykh*, and from *murid* to *murid*, and the details remain secret to the uninitiated. Basically, however, the journey towards God is a journey within the person and the forward movement on the path consists in a constant struggle, a *jihad*[3] of the *ruh* (spirit) against the *nafs*.

Nafs-jihad

> When Allah had created man, he wanted to place the *nafs* in him. Before he placed the *nafs* in man, he asked it, '*Nafs*! Who are you, and who am I?' The *nafs* answered, 'I am I and you are you!' God was angry, very angry. Then God ordered the angels to bring the *nafs* to hell and let it stay in the fire for three years. If a drop from a river is like the heat of fire in this life, then the heat of the fire in hell is like a river. For three years the *nafs* was tormented in hell. When the three years had passed, the *nafs* was brought back. When it had been brought back, God again asked, 'Who are you, and who am I?' The *nafs* again answered, 'You are you, and I am I.' And God gave orders to bring the *nafs* back to hell and torment it there for 300 years. When it was brought back again after 300 years, it answered the same thing again. Then it was tormented for 300,000 years, but still gave the same answer. Then God gave orders to keep it hungry for three days. After having kept it hungry for three days God asked, 'Who are you, and who am I?' And the *nafs* answered, 'You are my master, and I am your slave.' After having made the *nafs* a slave, God gave us the *nafs* inside ourselves in order for us to tame it by keeping it hungry.
>
> (Story recounted to me by Alisher, a young male Naqshbandi)

Nafs – preliminarily defined as the lower, desiring human self or base instincts (Schimmel 1975: 112) – is just as indispensable a part of human existence as are *qalb* (the heart or soul) *ruh* (the spirit) and *aql* (the intellect). These concepts have provided the foundation for the development of theories of human psychology throughout the history of Sufism (ibid.: 112, 191–3). I will not dwell on these concepts as they have appeared in classical Islamic theology and philosophy; instead, I shall focus on the implications and uses of them among post-Soviet Bukhara Naqshbandis. Among them the understanding of the spiritual make-up of human beings is based on the classical concepts of *qalb*, *ruh*, *aql* and *nafs.* According to this understanding, the *qalb* is the place from where man is morally 'controlled', where the fight between Good and Evil takes place, and from where man's awareness or ignorance of Allah originates. It is the place where Allah's gaze falls, and on account of which he assesses man. In a pure, sinless human being, the heart will be pure, and Allah will see his own reflection in it. But for every sin a human being commits, the heart gets darker, Allah's reflection in it becomes blurred and ultimately the *nafs* consolidates its rule there. If the *nafs* is left untamed and uncontrolled, Satan can take it over. If the *nafs* controlled by Satan gets the upper hand in the constitution of a human being, it will make him or her break all sorts of social and moral conventions; it will make him or her greedy, envious and asocial. As Fatima put it:

> *Nafs* makes people dissociate from other people. A fire of avoidance burns in them. For example, if you have a big car, you forget everything and everybody around you. If you stand at the top of a mountain you do not see anything, you forget your friends [. . .] you are willing to do anything to satisfy your needs; you are even willing to kill.

Returning to the point that creating a satisfying social existence is a matter of working out some kind of balance between active and passive modes of being, one might say that an uncontrolled *nafs* destroys this balance, making people desire absolute domination or possession of the world and making them strive for agency without moral grounding.

While they rarely referred to any standardized *nafs*-typology, the Bukhara Naqshbandis I discussed the matter with sometimes distinguished between several kinds of *nafs*, defined in terms of what the *nafs* makes people do or by the specific object of the *nafs*: the desire to eat and drink, which can make people eat and drink things that are *haram*;[4] sexual desire, which can make people engage in forbidden sexual relations; the desire for possession of money and material wealth, which can make people lie, steal, kill and use all sorts of dirty tricks; the desire for fame and high social position, which can make people turn to bribery and fraud; and envy, which can make people gossip and quarrel with each other, sending each other the evil eye. The *nafs* can make some people insane if the object of desire remains outside their reach.

The *murid* should act contrary to the demands of the *nafs* in order to tame it and gain control of it. Extreme forms of ascetic *nafs-jihad* are very rare in this

tariqa: Naqshbandis generally consider the middle way between excessive abstinence and excessive indulgence safer as well as more compatible with the demands of the modern world. Classical means for taming and training the *nafs* like fasting and sleeplessness are, however, practised by Bukhara Naqshbandis today, as is the *chilla*, the retreat for a certain number of days – ideally 40 – where the *murid* spends his or her time reading the Qur'an and praying while fasting. Common tasks are also politeness and service: the *murid* is encouraged to be polite to and serve others, no matter who: 'For example, you are sitting among four persons who are drinking vodka. They are very far from Allah, but anyway, do also serve these alcoholics', as a young male Naqshbandi expressed it. Or as another *murid* expressed it, 'Be like a light and give the light to everyone. Be like a needle without clothes, but sew clothes for other people.' The *murid* is also instructed in *muraqaba* (contemplation on the *shaykh*) and in various special prayers. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, he or she is instructed in taming his or her *nafs* through the practice of *zikr*.

Zikr

The *zikr*, that is the remembrance or recollection of God in the form of repetitive invocations of his name and various religious formulas, is founded upon the Qur'anic injunction to remember God often (*Sura* 33: 40). In Sufism this recollection of God has been developed and refined to such as degree that the *zikr* is now regarded as a distinctive Sufi form of worship. In Naqshbandiyya, more particularly, the importance attributed to the *zikr* is expressed in the principle of 'remembrance' (*yod kard*), which is one of the 11 principles which form a general statement of the character and spiritual method of the Naqshbandiyya (cf. Algar 1990a: 9).[5]

The *zikr* can be performed at any place and at any time, both silently and aloud. Both the vocal and the silent *zikr* have been practised by branches of the Naqshbandiyya (Togan 1999). The Bukhara Naqshbandis I discussed the *zikr* with attached very great importance to the fact that their *zikr* was *xufiyya*, that it is inner, rather than spoken out loud.[6] The silent *zikr*, according to the Naqshbandi tradition, was adopted by Abdulkholiq G'ijduvoniy, who transmitted it to Bahouddin Naqshband during an encounter Bahouddin had with his spirit (Algar 1990a: 11; Buxoriy 1993; Trimingham 1971). The Naqshbandis I discussed the *zikr* with pointed out that the *jahriyya* (spoken aloud) *zikr* may lead the *murid* to focus his attention on his outward appearance and thus distract him from the spiritual *jihad*, and that the *jahriyya zikr*, furthermore, can be a cover for evil, a kind of hypocritical showing-off. A *murid* compared the *jahriyya zikr* to the *hijab*, pointing out that just as people can cover themselves and still be evil inside, they can shout Allah's name out loud while remaining dark within. A person practising the *xufiyya zikr* or *zikr qalbi* (*zikr* of the heart), as they also call it, on the other hand, focuses his attention on Allah alone, in his body's moral centre where Allah's gaze falls, in the meeting point between body and spirit.

As mentioned, the *zikr* can be performed at any time and at any place. The

attraction of the *xufiyya zikr* for many Bukhara Naqshbandis also lies in the fact that it can be performed while they are engaging in all sorts of worldly concerns. They are also instructed in performing the *zikr* in a more ritualized way: after reading the *namoz* at sunset, the *murid* sits down, closes his eyes and imagines his *shaykh* before his eyes in order to get the *shaykh*'s spiritual help during the recollection. He attempts to chase all thoughts away, to arrest all senses, in order to concentrate fully on the *zikr*; to empty himself in order to become completely filled with God. Remembering, then, that he is sinful, he asks God for forgiveness. After that, the *zikr* consists of a certain combination of recitation of *Sura*s, the *shahada* (profession of faith) and phrases such as *Al-hamdu li-llah* (Praised be Allah), *La ilaha illa Allah* (There is no Allah but Allah) and the recollection of *Allah* and his names. It is the *shaykh* or *vakil* who decides which specific *zikr* is suitable for the spiritual state of the *murid*. During the recollection of God, the *murid* closes his lips. He places his tongue on the roof of his mouth or bites his tongue with his front teeth to make sure that speech does not interrupt, concentrating all his senses in his heart. He may hold a *tasbeh* (rosary) against the heart and count with it. He tries to imagine that he dies, that he is buried, that his soul leaves his body and that he is not in this world. In doing this, he realizes that nothing in this world is of any value except for his good deeds.

For every *zikr* the *murid* performs, his heart becomes purer, the mirror of his heart becomes polished; the darkness there which prevents him from reaching God disappears, and Allah is reflected in it. Allah's blessedness is allowed to enter the depth of the *murid*'s very being, uncovering his very essence. The clear blood in the heart then runs though his whole body and cleanses it; Satan is be exorcized, the *nafs* is tamed, and the *murid* is filled with Allah. As Dilfuza explained it:

> When you do something evil, a spot appears on your heart . . . when you keep on doing evil things, spots keep on appearing [. . .] The heart is like a basin. You can fill this basin with *haram* water or with *halal* water. Satan has been given the power to run in the blood of human beings. Now *xufiyya zikr* . . . when you perform it, when you say 'Allah', you fill the basin with *halal* water, drop by drop. Then it runs out with the blood. When you do like that; when you keep on saying 'Allah, Allah', your heart is filled with God. When you fill the blood like this, you kill the *nafs*.

This process, which fuses body and spirit or rather points at their connectedness, is very strongly felt among the Naqshbandis. They talk about sweating during the *zikr*; about rising body temperatures, a strongly felt body heat; about forces, energies running through their bodies; about the heart beating faster or with a particular rhythm; about pain in and around the heart, and about intense emotional release. Some have visions during this state. Typically, they see a ray of light, and in this ray of light they see *avliyo*, prophets, *shaykh*s, or they hear things. Some feel the sins they have committed which have caused the darkness in their hearts, and which God will confront them with on the last day, so

intensely that they burst into tears. If irrelevant thoughts – most often everyday worries – do not break in, or if the adept succeeds at chasing such irrelevant thoughts away when they appear, returning to the *zikr*,[7] he or she may experience the overwhelming state of *jazba* (attraction). *Jazba* is the moment when a person experiences his or her heart as totally filled with the love of God. It is a moment of ecstasy and perfect union (cf. also Schimmel 1975: 105). The *murid* loses any sense of distinction between himself and the world. This state is experienced so intensely that the presence of the *shaykh* or his representative is believed to be absolutely necessary. If there is no spiritual guide to control the *jazba*, it can make some people go insane.

This state of *jazba* – like many states experienced by the Naqshbandis – was one they found very difficult to describe in ordinary language and to someone who had not experienced it herself. I frequently encountered this barrier when I talked with my Naqshbandi acquaintances in Bukhara. Sufism, they maintained, cannot be explained; it cannot be learned from books, but only learned in practice. 'Words remain on the shore', as Annemarie Schimmel (Schimmel 1975: 7) has put it. 'Things about Allah should be explained with Allah's knowledge', as Erkin said. Or in the more prosaic words of Rustam:

> It is difficult to explain by words . . . you know . . . I mean, I know one story about a man who asked . . . he was impotent. He asked another man, 'What is the ecstasy of being with a woman? Explain this to me!' [The other man] answered, 'You are stupid. It cannot be explained in words.' It is like this. I mean the same. You know what you feel. And it is difficult to tell it to someone outside the *tariqa*. First you should be inside, and you should feel yourself what is given to you. It is very difficult to describe this, to explain this.

The limitation of words is an impediment inherent in the human condition. This impediment is accentuated in mysticism, where particular importance is granted those aspects of experience that escape ordinary discourse. I fully acknowledge that there were limits to what I could understand, remaining on the shore together with the words and settling with the compromise of focusing on shared expressions while paying attention to the limits people attributed to these expressions. Actually the Naqshbandis I talked with were very patient in their attempts to explain the fundamentally inexplicable to me, sometimes accompanying their explanations with disarming smiles and embarrassed laughter which, it seemed, underlined the inadequacies of these explanations.

Dwelling in the body

I once participated in a *xatm* (gathering) among a circle of Naqshbandi women. Afterwards, a couple of the women asked me what I had felt during the *zikr*. I answered that I had not really felt the *zikr*, as I had not performed it myself, not knowing any *zikr* in practice, but that I had felt a very concentrated atmosphere

there. They nodded and told me that I had indeed experienced the spirit of the *zikr*. One of them asked if I had felt warm inside. I answered that I did not know – maybe. They nodded again and told me that I had felt the light of Allah in my heart. These women, in other words, transformed my vague sensations into signs of divine power manifesting itself and taught me how to recognize these signs. They taught me to attend to experience in a new way, thereby giving it new meaning, and to attend to formerly insignificant or unconscious aspects of experience.

This may be what the *murid* experiences when entering the *tariqa*: learning to attend self-consciously to experience in new ways, giving it new meaning, and learning to attend to new aspects of experience under the guidance of their *shaykh*, the *shaykh*'s representative or other Naqshbandis. Sufism in practice consists in feeling and unveiling; teaching follows rather than precedes experience (Trimingham 1971: 3). The *murid*, in other words, is taught to dwell on certain feelings and emotions, which thus become places similar to places in the outside landscape. Like places in the outside landscape, feelings and emotions are places that *gather*; as histories, thoughts and memories are attached to them. A strongly felt body heat, or a certain pain in and around the heart, for example, is associated with a story of the battle between Good and Evil, the taming of the *nafs* and with aspects of the *murid*'s own life story: those aspects of one's former life, which are, in retrospect, seen as reasons why the presence of the *nafs* is felt so intensely. And just as they learn to read the story of the outside landscape, people learn to read the story of the landscape of emotions through an education of attention as they travel through it with their mentors or discover things for themselves. This inner journey is supposed to effect fundamental changes in the lifeworld of the *murid*.

Journey in the homeland

> Once, Allah called upon a man and said, 'When I was hungry you did not give me any bread; when I was thirsty you did not give me anything to drink; when I was ill you did not come to me.' The man said, 'You are Allah, you do not need anything, you are almighty.' But Allah said, 'Yesterday in a house there was a man who was hungry, but you did not give him anything to eat. If you had given him something to eat you would have seen me. In another house there was a man who was thirsty, but you gave him nothing to drink. If you had given him something to drink you would have seen me. In a third house there was a sick man, but you did not visit him. If you had visited him, you would have seen me.' When your heart's eye is opened, you sense people around you, everything that is in their hearts . . . And if you act accordingly, if you do something good for them, that means that you are following God's way, that you are in contact with God. The *tariqa*, Mariaxon,[8] is a journey . . . not the body's journey, but the spirit's journey. You journey within yourself in order to change.
>
> (Story recounted to me by Hadicha, an elderly Naqshbandi woman)

'Journey in the homeland' (*Safar dar vatan*), is another of the 11 basic principles of Naqshbandiyya's teaching. The adept must make a journey within him- or herself in order to change: a spiritual quest which draws on the imagery of the earthly pilgrim. As Rano explained it:

> The teaching of the Naqshbandiyya emphasizes spiritual travel. For example, a human being can live here and go to Mecca but not change at all. No change at all is taking place. But if a human being stays here, travels within himself and cleanses his morals, liberates himself from his bad sides, his spirit will, of course, make progress.

The most important weapon against one's bad sides, again, is the *zikr*. The ultimate goal of the *nafs-jihad* of the *zikr* is to make the heart do *zikr* all the time, by itself, as a habit. It is to make the *zikr* permeate one's entire being. As Ilhom puts it:

> In the Qur'an it is written that the *zikr* should be done all the time. But that is impossible, because we work. But the *tariqa* teaches us how to achieve that. The *zikr* becomes a habit for the heart. When it beats . . . every time it beats it says 'Allah, Allah.' And, I mean . . . you do not feel your habits. I mean, other people look at you and know that you have some habit or . . . when I speak, you can see that my hand goes up to my hair . . . I mean, I do not feel it myself, it has become a habit [. . .] Even if you are doing other things, and even if you are reading or writing, your heart says 'Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah!' all the while.

I was told numerous stories about *avliyo* for whom the *zikr* was so habitual that their hearts kept doing *zikr* up to several days after their death. In spite of the fact that, according to tradition, deceased people should be buried as soon as possible, Tesha Bobo's *shaykh* was not buried until three days after he died, because those who came to bury him kept hearing his *zikr*.

By practising the *xufiyya zikr* – by making the *zikr* a habit, a part of his or her being – the *murid* changes his or her very constitution, his or her inner landscape, so to speak. The *murid* eventually experiences the opening of the eye of the heart, *qalb qo'zi*. A person with an open heart's eye stops thinking and acting in accordance with his or her ordinary intellect and ordinary senses. Instead he or she starts thinking and acting according to the reason of the heart, for example becoming able to sense how other people feel and to act accordingly. Although the state in which a person's entire existence becomes a recollection of Allah, in which Allah fills his or her entire being and he or she is physically unable to do anything evil, is a state within the reach of only very few – *avliyo* – less absolute transformations also take the *murid* closer to God, and many of the Naqshbandis I talked with had indeed experienced transformations of their inner life after entering the *tariqa*. The entrance into the *tariqa* had initiated a reconstruction of their very selves. As Ilhom put it:

> I feel that there is a development taking place in my inner state. Every step, every … every action, good action, gives me some … higher level. It pushes me to higher levels [laughs]. It is like a staircase … millions, millions of stairs, and with every action you go up or go down. If you do bad things, you go down, maybe ten or 100 steps, and when you want to go up, it means that you suppress your *nafs*, and it is step by step, and it is very difficult. Actually it is very difficult to suppress the *nafs*. Sometimes I feel that I do not have the power to suppress my *nafs*. And at that time we seek help from … spiritual help from our *shaykh*. And we know we can only go up through his spiritual power.

Paradoxically, some *murid*s experience that the *nafs* becomes even stronger than before when they start trying to tame it. As Rustam explained it:

> After becoming Sufi your *nafs* becomes stronger than ever. It becomes very strong, and all the time bad things are going straight to the mind of the Sufi. This is a very difficult time. I know one story: someone asked a *tabib* [traditional healer] if he could explain how to make a certain medicine for a certain disease. The *tabib* answered him, 'Take these things and cook them, and when you cook them you must not think of a polar bear!' The man could not make the medicine, because if you are told not to think of a polar bear you will think of it all the time. This is what Sufis experience. The Sufi knows that he should not do this and that. Before he did not know. Evil things were habits for him. When he thinks of them, evil things give him orders all the time.

The fact that the *nafs* sometimes is felt to be stronger when one tries to suppress it is another reason why a *shaykh* is considered absolutely indispensable as guide and support to the *murid* on his way. For some, the demands of the *nafs* become virtually impossible to resist. One of the Naqshbandis I talked with during my fieldwork had left the *tariqa* temporarily because he felt that his *nafs* had won over his spirit and made him sin too much.

Most of the Naqshbandis I spoke with, however, talked only about the positive changes they had experienced taking place in their lifeworlds. They talked about changes in their character: being happier, humbler, calmer and more kind and caring towards their surroundings, not spreading evil gossip, not hurting other people, doing good things for others without any ulterior motives other than getting closer to God. They experienced not being so worried about worldly problems any more, being aware that this life and this world are temporary, and that they will not take anything from it with them when they leave it except for their good deeds. They felt prepared to die, not fearing the Day of Judgment, on which they meditated regularly, trying to lead their lives with it in the back of their minds.[9] They talked about becoming much more sensitive to the needs of people around them, more able to feel people's inner life, their spirituality. Erkin, for example, told me this story as an illustration:

> I am happy to have felt that I have had my heart's eye, heart's ear opened. For example I sit here with you for five minutes. You talk to me, I look you into the eyes, and I can tell 10 per cent of what is inside you, what you say, what is in your heart. It is like . . . once I had a terrible toothache and went to the clinic to have my tooth pulled out. There was a staircase. From the top of the staircase I saw a woman [. . .] I went towards her and asked if she would like to go with me in my car. She answered that she wanted to ask me if she could go with me, but that she did not know how to ask me. Then I said, 'You said it, and I heard it' [. . .] I heard that, I heard it with my heart [. . .] At that moment Satan said, 'What are you doing? Your own tooth is hurting terribly. Go home quickly and take a rest!' But Allah said 'Take her with you!' From situations like this you know a person. You know whether he is following Satan's or God's way.

They also talk about increased sensitivity toward things that are *haram*. Some told me how this increasing sensitivity helped them in the bazaar where it could be difficult to discover whether things were *haram* or *halal* with the naked eye. Others told that they had experienced falling ill if they attended a *to'y* or were present in other situations where there was alcohol and other *haram* things involved. Like Muazzam:

> The first time I discovered that was at my brother's wedding. A week before the wedding I offered to help with the cooking. But at the wedding I fell ill. There were no doctors who could help me . . . I knew that it was because of the vodka and all the *haram* things that were there. The next time I experienced it was when my sister got married. I wanted to help, but I fell ill and could not help. Then I realized that I could not attend such parties. I cried because I could not help, but I was not responsible. It was Allah who would not make me do it.

In other words, the source of the *murid*s' increasing spiritual strength was also a source of their increasing vulnerability, as they now felt the forces of evil much more intensely, also among close and beloved relatives and friends, whom they now sometimes felt alienated from.

The rule of the *nafs*

Having their attention directed towards the *nafs*, many Naqshbandis also become attentive to the ways in which the *nafs* manifests itself in their surroundings, in contemporary society in general. Dilfuza described how she often in the bazaar where she worked felt the presence of people who were controlled by their *nafs* and driven by an unscrupulous desire for profit which would make them cheat, lie to and steal from others if they could see any gain in that. Also for many others of the Bukhara Naqshbandis I became acquainted with during my fieldwork, there were signs that the corrosion of time had cloaked people's

hearts in darkness and enabled the uncontrolled *nafs* to rule people's lives more than ever before. The rule of the *nafs*, in their views, expressed itself first and foremost in preoccupation with money, commodities and social position, which they considered completely out of proportion. Money, commodities and social ambitions blinded the hearts' eyes of people and made them act in evil, hazardous and senseless manners. As Bibi Raja, an elderly female Naqshbandi, put it:

> Today, the *nafs* rules people. For example, there are a lot of people with a strong *nafs* who travel to Russia or the Arab countries to do business, to earn money. One day they might have a surplus, but the next day they might face bankruptcy and lose everything, house, car. This is because of *nafs*. It is better to have an ordinary salary and wait for better times. One day you have something. The next day you have nothing. But nowadays people do not have enough patience.

Or, as Sharofat expressed it:

> Once I read a book about a beauty and a ruler. The ruler asked the beauty when the Day of Judgment would be. The beauty answered that the Day of Judgment would start when the *mullah*s would start praying for money. Today, many *mullah*s are praying for money. If I know 100 *mullah*s, only 20 of them are *halal* and pray for the sake of Allah alone. Money controls people's morals. Money is people's new God. It is all because of *nafs*.

For these Bukhara Naqshbandis, the heart or soul resembled a chronotrope, and the inner journey in the microcosm of the body which they undertook upon entering the *tariqa* resembled a kind of virtual time travel. This journey was like an archaeology of the human heart meant to uncover and recover in their innermost being what time had made them lose or, rather, had covered in darkness: a recovery of lost knowledge. The principles of 'attentiveness' (*nigoh dosht*) and 'recollection' (*yod dosht*) – two more of the 11 principles central to Naqshbandiyya's teaching – were explained to me as crucial in this regard. As Muqaddam explained these principles:

> 'Attentiveness.' That is to remember. Because, for example, when a human being does a lot of *zikr*, the memory works all the time, this and that has to be done . . . it teaches people to control their memory [. . .] Memory is given by both Satan and God. That is, sometimes you lose your memory, your mind is filled with unnecessary information. Because of the 70 Soviet years many people in Uzbekistan have forgotten God. They may know a lot, read a lot of books, but God is not reflected in their hearts. If you keep on controlling your memory, you throw away the unnecessary information and only keep things which are good for you. 'Recollection' – that is a state where Allah is in your memory all the time, both in your memory and your heart, in your body and in your work.

Listening to Bukhara Naqshbandis' complaints about society and witnessing their attempts to tame its evil aspects, to recover a lost or forgotten essence, one might expect them to be attracted to the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* as a way of renouncing this world. It seems as if the Naqshbandis might be understood as striving to create an alternative to the *nafs*-pervaded society. This was not the case, however. Their attitude towards society, and the pursuit of money, power and material things, which they considered to be characteristic of it, was much more ambiguous.

The heart with God, the hand at work

In their work on Sufism in the Soviet Union, Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush noted that because the Naqshbandi adept remains in the world and is required to adjust his social behaviour to meet the requirements of everyday life, the Naqshbandiyya has a unique ability to adapt to changing social and political conditions (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 8). And many of the Bukhara Naqshbandis I talked with did indeed believe that the Naqshbandiyya was particularly well suited to modern – or, more specifically, post-Soviet – society.

When asked what they found particularly attractive in the Naqshbandiyya teaching compared to other ways of Islam, they emphasized two closely interconnected characteristics as its main forces. First, Naqshbandiyya is a *tariqa* that does not forsake this world but, on the contrary, teaches that this world is important and demands of its adepts that they participate in the normal life of society, work for a living, take care of the family and serve their local community and their country. Central importance is given to the value of labour. Bahouddin Naqshband, they say, worked in order to earn a living,[10] and following in his way one should do the same. That aspect of Naqshbandiyya's teaching, they pointed out, was very practical these days, as the difficult times demanded that both men and women work very hard in order to make a living, not only for their own sake, or for the sake of their families, but also for the sake of their country. As Gulchehra put it:

> During the empire of Amir Timur it was a perfect ideology. When the Mongols invaded the country, the country of Turkestan was left in ruins. So if the *jahriyya* Sufis . . . if they only did the *zikr* . . . this country would never have flourished again. It is a bit like this today. We have to work very hard to make our country flourish again. If you do not work, who needs you then?

They emphasized that in Naqshbandiyya engagement in the present is considered important – one should not waste time – and that this was essential to keep in mind these days, because one certainly could not afford to waste time. One of the principles that Bahouddin Naqshband added to Naqshbandiyya's teaching was 'awareness of time' (*vuqufi zamoniy*). As Rano said, explaining this principle to me:

> Look, how strong this teaching is. How do you pass your time? You do not pass your time with nonsense. You control time. The most valuable thing you have is time. Every day, a lot of people waste their time doing unnecessary things. But [the Naqshbandis] only give their time if it is necessary. If it is not necessary they never give their time. Bahouddin said that there are a lot of sins in the world, but the far biggest is to waste time. This is very important today. We cannot afford to waste time [. . .] You see how necessary the Naqshbandiyya teaching is for you today [. . .] Today, in the market economic times, it is necessary to work, you really need to control your time. Back in Soviet times there was another atmosphere. There were those who went to work and did nothing, but they received their salary anyway. Today you have to work. Everybody has to do their best. Because of this view the Naqshbandiyya teaching is being given a lot of attention today.

Or as Sodiq explained it,

> Other *tariqa*s . . . for example the Mavlaviyya, which Rumi[11] founded; their *zikr* was *jahriyya.* And Yasaviyya was like that. That is, in their *khanaqah* all *murid*s gathered in front of the *shaykh* and kneeled before him. That takes their time; it takes time from their work. Today the Naqshbandiyya . . . 'The heart with God, the hand at work' . . . suits our politics. We have to work very hard, not only for ourselves, but also for our country.

The darkness that filled the hearts of most people was something not only mentioned as an explanation for why these people acted amorally, being controlled by desires for money, commodities and social position. It was also something they made to account for the fact that many people did not know how to cope with the present circumstances: they were blind to the guidance a person whose heart is pure receives from God and his *avliyo*. As Nasim, a university student, put it:

> Today life is difficult for everybody, but some people think . . . When you have your heart's eye opened, you start to sense what to do. It is difficult to explain. But I experience it all the time . . . after entering the *tariqa* . . . that I know what to do. My marks, for example, have become better. But some people, many people . . . their hearts are not open to this kind of knowledge.

And although many of the Naqshbandis I talked with emphasized the importance of doing good deeds without having any motives other than getting closer to God, and although the solution of worldly problems was subordinated to their spiritual growth, they had often experienced *baraka*, blessing power, in the form of increasing success in worldly matters. They considered this *baraka* as given to them by God as a kind of approval of and reward for their good deeds.

While the *murids* represented Naqshbandiyya as particularly suitable for modern, post-Soviet society, they were equally clear in defining themselves in

opposition to the 'Wahhabis' – a term which most of them used as a cover term for the various radical Islamic opposition movements that had made their presence felt in the country in the years around and after independence. Their use of the terms thus seemed similar to the official discourse. As one of them explained,

> They want to turn history back 1,500 years. To sensible people that makes no sense. Therefore, things will not be as they want them to be. Naqshbandiyya's teaching brings us to the essence of Islam. Therefore, the extremists, Wahhabis – whatever movement it is – will not reach their goal. They cannot destroy Naqshbandiyya. They only know the surface of Islam, the outer side. They have only adopted what suits their interests.

Wahhabism, they thought, was also incompatible with Uzbek culture. As another *murid* said,

> When you learn about religion, you should do it at the place where you live. You should not take advice from people you do not know, and who are not close to you. The Wahhabis are spreading a teaching which is not suitable for us.

The only reason the 'Wahhabis' had succeeded in gaining some kind of foothold in society in spite of the fact that their interpretation of Islam was fundamentally incompatible with it, they said, was the general ignorance of Islam that was the result of the '70 Soviet years' and the present-day distractions. It was a consequence of the fact that many people were 'blind in their practice', as one of them termed it. As Rustam put it:

> Some people go astray. They become extremists or . . . they think they should do *jihad* in this life or fight against someone who is doing something wrong to them, and the common mistake is that people . . . Muslims think that Americans or Europeans or others . . . Jews . . . they believe that they are enemies. But I do not think so, because – you know – the true enemies of Islam are ourselves. Because we do not know Islam in the true sense, and we do not practise it in the right way.

The second characteristic they mentioned when asked about what they found particularly attractive in the Naqshbandiyya teaching was that it is in fact very easy to combine an engagement in Naqshbandiyya with a normal life in society, as everything in the Naqshbandiyya is *xufiyya* (inner). They frequently used the term *xufiyya*, not only about the *zikr*, but about every aspect of Naqsbandi practice. As Alisher said,

> In the *tariqa* it is like . . . I do not know how you know that I am Sufi . . . you can be a perfect Sufi when nobody know that you are Sufi, you should not show off. The Naqshbandiyya is *xufiyya*.

The emphasis on the 'inner' in the Naqshbandiyya is also expressed in the principle of 'solitude in the crowd' (*xilvat dar anjuman*). Shuhrat explained it in this way:

> 'Solitude in the crowd' means that while you are in the crowd, in society, God is in the heart, secretly you are with God. That is, you work, speak with other people, but God is in your heart. That is, if you want to reach God, it is not necessary to throw away your family, you do not have to isolate yourself, you should only be segregated in your heart, be with God.

Alisher put it in this way:

> In Naqshbandiyya, if you wish, you can be modern. For example, you can be well dressed, you can have a car, and you can be rich, but inside, from within . . . that is, 'the heart with God, the hand at work'. Or 'solitude in the crowd'. Do you know the meaning of this? The purpose is not that people around you should think that this guy has entered the *tariqa* [. . .] You do not have to study at *madrasa* or to study Islam at the university. I, for example, study economics, and when people see me, they do not think that I am in the *tariqa*.

Or as Rustam put it:

> Today we live in a sort of European or Russian [society]. But that is not important. The most important thing in Naqshbandiyya is that everything is *xufiyya.* That means that you can live like others, you can go to work, you can look like everybody else. Only inside you are different [. . .] I mean, our *vakil* says that you should dress like anyone else, our dress should even be better than others'. And you should be like other people around. When you behave differently, and you put on some beard and cap [he draws a long beard and a hat with his hands and laughs] and go to the university, people there will not accept you [. . .] We do not proselytize. Proselytizing is not so good and discussing the *tariqa* or Islam is not accepted. I mean, it is considered something bad. For if you discuss with someone, at the end of the day you become enemies. Therefore it is considered something bad. Sufis do not proselytize; we do not say that you are doing wrong. I mean, it is a very bad thing. Our proselytizing is our actions. If you act in the right way and people see that everything you do is good – that is good proselytizing.

Looking and behaving like anybody else, one does not disturb the normal course of life in society. This social conformity is considered of central importance. As Shuhrat put it:

> [Before] *darvishes*[12] roamed around the streets of the cities and disturbed society, disturbed the peace with problems. We do not say that other *tariqa*s

> are bad. They served their own time. Naqshbandiyya is just suitable for another world [. . .] The prayer consists of ten parts,[13] they said. Of them, nine are about working and getting *halal* money, *halal* food. One part consists of the remaining prayers. This is where the essence of Naqshbandiyya is opened [. . .] Every human being has their task. That is, every human being should know his task. Only then will God be satisfied with us, our family will be satisfied with us, and society will be satisfied with us [. . .] Naqshbandiyya is not a fossilized teaching. It develops all the time. For the essence is not lost, changes are possible. The face can change, but the essence remains the same.

Or, as Bibi Raja put it:

> People should adapt to the time they live in [. . .] I have always been Muslim in my heart, although I may not have practised Islam. But [during Soviet rule] the times were like that, and everybody had the same problems. Also today you should adapt [. . .] You have to change your ways of seeing things and not see things in the same manner as you did in Soviet times. Bahouddin Naqshband's saying, 'The heart with God, the hand at work', is about adaptation. You should have Allah in your heart and work with your hand. To say that 'I am Muslim' and sit and pray the whole day, that does not suit present-day society. Now you have to work and earn money.

Allying with the *nafs*

It might seem paradoxical that it is possible to participate in and view Naqshbandiyya as particularly compatible with a society pervaded by the most vulgar expressions of the *nafs* while at the same time being committed to the struggle against the *nafs*. It might also seem paradoxical that Bukhara Naqshbandis attach such great value to labour, to being able to work for a living, and for the benefit of the community and their country, while at the same time seeing signs of an uncontrolled *nafs* in their fellow countrymen's ways of making a living in post-Soviet society. Sometimes the *murid*s made the darkness that filled people's hearts account for the amoral state of society, while at other times they made it account for the fact that many people were not able to act within the parameters of this society. They undertook virtual time travel within the microcosms of their own bodies in order to uncover what time had cloaked in darkness, while at the same time emphasizing the necessity of being present. Confronted with these apparent paradoxes, my Naqshbandi acquaintances would usually tell me that whether you were able to tackle the challenges of present-day society in a morally correct manner was an entirely individual matter. It was all a matter of taming the *nafs*. In other words, in order to be present in the world in the right way, one should strive to turn back one's inner time.

As mentioned, for some years Dilfuza had been working at Bukhara's central bazaar selling clothes in order to help support her family. The sphere of business

is considered morally dubious in Uzbekistan (see Chapter 8). Dilfuza, however, did not consider the fact that she worked at the bazaar as a problem: while she would be doing her job there, selling clothes to people, she would also be doing the *zikr*, getting closer to God, cleaning herself of her evil aspects, and thus being unable to engage in any kind of morally dubious activity.

Or take Erkin, who had started a small clothing factory after independence. Though he was very articulate about the necessity of *nafs-jihad* for the opening of the eye of the heart, he also pointed to the fact that *nafs* is a necessary part of the constitution of human beings, and a part which is given by God:

> *Nafs* incites to competition. For example, if your *nafs* . . . if you want to eat something, you have to create it. I am a tailor. If you make dresses and sell them, you compete. Because of *nafs*. Now Bahouddin Naqshband said, 'The heart with God, the hand at work.' That is, do not just sit in this world saying 'Allah!' You have to work [. . .] There is also a saying: 'If you make an effort, I will bless you.'[14] These are the words of God [. . .] I will tell you about something [President] Karimov has said. When he was young he said that he could not live without work. I cannot live without work either. I hate to see lazy people. I have not told you something Karimov has said. I have given you my own opinion. God hates lazy people. Satan attacks lazy people.

A person without *nafs* would not be able to act at all. A person with a weak *nafs* would be apathetic, without initiative or as Erkin expresses it, lazy. Such a person would be far from living up to the ideal of self-reliance which is emphasized as very important among Bukhara Naqshbandis. The *nafs* only has to be controlled. When controlled, it is possible to ally with it in the service of the Good. As mentioned, if the Naqshbandi succeeds in making his or her heart do *zikr* all the time by itself as a habit, his or her actions will inevitably be good. This is an ideal state, attainable only for the very few. Still, the Naqshbandi has to strive for it. Erkin, for example, emphasized that he aimed at working with an open heart's eye in order to be fair, in order to avoid engaging in dirty business tricks or corruption, and that he worked not for himself, but for the sake of his children and his country. He tried to follow the principles of 'awareness in breathing' (*xush dar dam*) and 'watching the steps' (*nazar bar qadam*):

> 'Awareness in breathing' means that you should be attentive all the time; every breath you take should be with God [. . .] 'Watching the steps', that is, you should pay attention to every step you take. Whatever you do, the spirit should always follow.

Because of this, he believed, God had blessed him with *baraka* (blessing power): his business went well and he had slowly expanded over the last few years.

Or take Alisher, who studied economics at Bukhara State University and had quite big ambitions for his career. When I asked him if that had to do with his *nafs*, he told me that

> I have *nafs* too. There is nobody who has no *nafs* in this world. But my main goal is . . . I study . . . I can study, I can serve my country . . . it is possible that I will go abroad to study, but I work to serve my country, to serve my people. Every step you take counts as service. Within I serve my people, but outside the world view is different. Everything is for serving. It is possible that some day I will do something else, maybe I will become rich, find another job, but for now serving my country is the most important [. . .] *Nafs* . . . everybody has *nafs*. But by suppressing it, by taming it, you can make it serve God. And it is good to work, it is necessary. Allah blesses those who make an effort.

Rano expressed it in a more general way:

> Bahouddin worked, and meanwhile his heart remained with Allah. There was something very beautiful about this work. Other people only work for themselves. Naqshbandis only work for Allah. They never think how much they will get out of it, how much money they will get out of it. They do not think about those things. They only think that because Allah has given them the hands, because he has given them intellect, it is their duty. And the work they do is really beautiful in that sense. Their work is *halal.*

Nafs is a source of human agency and creativity as well as a source of human destructiveness. One might say that the term denotes an intentionality or world-directedness of human agency which can be either constructive or destructive and which therefore needs to be controlled. The Bukhara Naqshbandis I spoke with, although they found some aspects of post-Soviet society quite grim, were not primarily trying to change society as such, but rather to adopt a certain way of being in it: cleansing intentionality of its selfish and destructive aspects and providing agency with a moral foundation, thus achieving a transcendent spiritual individuality which made them agents and conduits of God's power and blessing (cf. Werbner 2003: 146–7). They deliberately sought to adapt themselves, engaging in the social games of the surrounding society, but doing so with a morally-grounded intentionality. And they hoped that this way of being in society would inspire others to follow their path too: both because they served as moral examples and because this way of being-in-the-world actually paid off – not only in the great game set up by God, where the stakes were one's fate in the afterlife, but also in the diverse social games they engaged in in this world.

As Pnina Werbner has noted in *Pilgrims of Love. An Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (2003), even though Sufism is characterized by self-denial, there are elements of Sufism which, like Calvinism and Protestantism more generally (cf. Weber 1991), support this-worldly orientations towards individual achievements and autonomy (Werbner 2003: 10). As bringer of divine blessing, the saint or the *shaykh* is believed to be able to change the course of nature, to affect the predestined movement of the universe. Hence, if, after their initiation, disciples succeed in their worldly endeavours, they interpret it as a sign of God's

blessing conferred upon them via their saint/*shaykh* (ibid.: 152). In this understanding of worldly success and predestination Werbner identifies a key to the continued attraction of the modern elite (civil servants, bureaucrats, businessmen, politicians, etc.) to Sufi orders.

This ambiguous valorization of both self-denial and self-assertion provides the *tariqa* and its teaching with a flexibility, which enables it to speak to various concerns as they emerge in various intersubjective encounters. Again one might say that when the Bukhara Naqshbandis felt a loss of agency in society; when they felt that it was impossible to manage in a society characterized by the free play of the uncontrolled *nafs*, they emphasized the moral critique of this *nafs*-pervaded society that the *tariqa* enabled them to construct as well as the alternative larger sphere of Being their engagement in the *tariqa* integrated them into: a sphere of Being in which their agency counted. When they experienced a sense of agency and success in the surrounding society, they emphasized the world-directedness of the teaching and a moral grounding of agency. In other words, they emphasized the way that *nafs-jihad* enabled them to convert the potentially anti-social *nafs* into an asset for the sustenance of the social and moral order.

An accommodating engagement

When Bukhara Naqshbandis talked with me about their engagement in the Naqshbandiyya and the relevance they perceived it to have in modern Uzbek society, they centred their arguments on a core of principles which have remained the same for hundreds of years. In their attempt to understand these principles and live according to them, they invested them with new meanings. They created new understandings of what it meant to be Muslim and Naqshbandi in a critical, but accommodating engagement with post-Soviet society and its predicaments, including official policies toward, and discourses on, Islam.

The central importance given to the value of labour expressed in Bahouddin Naqshband's saying 'The heart with God, the hand at work' was often interpreted as a call to serve the nation through labour (an interpretation which would not have made sense at the time of Bahouddin Naqshband, as the concept of the nation would not have made sense). They linked the importance of controlling memory to cleanse it of unnecessary ideas, and the idea of cleansing the heart of evilness to uncover the eye of the heart, with the historically specific need to recover an essence lost or forgotten during the Soviet years and/or because of the distractions of post-Soviet society. The trope of the heart became a kind of chronotrope for them: deep down underneath the darkness that had filled people's hearts, there was an unaffected time lagoon.

These Bukhara Naqshbandis thus engaged with and usually accommodated themselves to official narratives and the way the Naqshbandiyya teaching has been promoted in them. They most often also seemed to agree with the policy of the post-Soviet government of keeping religion a personal, interior matter. Although they expressed varying views on the sincerity of the politicians promoting aspects of the Naqshbandiyya tradition – everything from the idea that

President Karimov himself may be *avliyo* to the view that present-day politicians just made cynical use of the teaching for their own benefit – most of them approved of the way popular versions of the Naqshbandiyya teaching have been promoted in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. They believed that information about Naqshbandiyya's teaching might raise people's morality, pushing them in the right direction, and that it might also serve as a moral defence against wrong ideas such as those associated with 'Wahhabism'. However, they also expressed the view that there is a long way from the popular Naqshbandi tradition – Naqshbandiyya 'elevated to ideology', as a woman put it – and the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* as lived in practice. The same woman explained: 'Basically this teaching is about teaching people to control themselves. What people know the least about today is . . . most people know about the Second World War, they have a lot of information, but they do not know themselves.'

Shuhrat told me this story by the legendary Sufi mystic and poet Jalaluddin Rumi to illustrate the difference between Naqshbandiyya as ideology and Naqshbandiyya as lived:

> Once upon a time there was a king. He had a son, a prince. This prince was to lead the country after his father; he was to become king after his father. But the king doubted that he was able to lead the country. For a long time, he speculated about how to educate his son and then decided that the son should learn about the art of fortune telling. Then he summoned all the fortune tellers in the country and asked them to teach his son this science. After two years they went back to the king and said, 'Now we have taught your son everything. We have educated him in all sciences, and now you can examine him.' Then the king examined his son. On his hand he wore a ring. He took it off, hid it and asked his son, 'What do I have in my hand?' And the son – he had learned the art of fortune telling – he thought and said, 'In your hand there is a circle with a hole.' The king was so happy. 'That is right, my son. But what is it?' The king's son thought and then at last said, 'In your hand there is a millstone.' The king was stunned: 'With your intelligence you can describe the shape of this object, but your talent does not suffice to see that the hand of a man cannot contain a millstone.' [. . .] And Rumi continues, commenting that the knowledge of the learned men of our time is so strong that they can slice a hair lengthwise with a knife. There is nothing that they do not know. They read about purity and tell everybody about it. But ask if they are pure themselves? The point is that man should first and foremost make himself clean, know himself. It is good that people know about the Naqshbandiyya, but there is a big difference between this knowledge and the way, the *tariqa*.

Furthermore, the Naqshbandis I talked with were very aware that although Naqshbandiyya is promoted as popular tradition, it is not very likely that the Uzbek government is interested in seeing Naqshbandiyya, as a social organization beyond its control, grow in strength and influence. They were also acutely

aware that state officials often approached the question of which expressions of Muslim identity were to be regarded as suspect in very different ways. Several of them had experienced harassment from local officials.

Dilfuza was one of the people I knew who talked most openly about how difficult it could be to live with this state of affairs at times. When I first met her in 1998, she had struck me as one of the most government-loyal Muslims I had met during my fieldwork. Official rhetoric often echoed in her words when she talked about the reasons for her engagement in Naqshbandiyya, contrasting her understanding of Islam with that of the 'Wahhabis' and their political aspirations and use of violence and terror. She often expressed her gratitude to President Karimov for guaranteeing freedom of religion, for making it possible to show one's Muslim identity overtly, and for making it possible for her son to take a religious education. And in the prayers with which she closed our conversations, she would usually include some wishes for the well-being of the president.

When I returned to Bukhara in 2000, Dilfuza seemed disillusioned. The first time I visited her and asked her if things had changed in Uzbekistan since I left, she hesitantly told me that people had become afraid of Islam, that many mosques had closed and that there was no freedom of religion in the country. She told me about the difficulties her son experienced as a practising Muslim in a student's hostel in Tashkent. Whenever he wanted to read *namoz*, she told me, he had to do it secretly. And if he wanted to keep his *ro'za*, fast, during Ramadan, he had to be very discreet as well. This was all because people were afraid of Islam, and because some people seemed to think that a person who prays is a Wahhabi. 'That is the way it has been since 16 February last year', she told me.

Actually I first heard about the Tashkent bombings of 16 February 1999 from Dilfuza. Like most other people, she was shocked, and she speculated about the reasons for the terror attack; about who was behind it, who or what was its target and – perhaps most importantly – what would happen now? She prayed for the bereaved, for the president and the government, and for the authorities to succeed in identifying those behind the bombings. 'They cannot be human beings', she stated, following official discourses in referring to them as representatives of some kind of radical otherness which had temporarily penetrated society but – as radical otherness – possible to get rid of and keep out for good.

In 2000 she talked in a different way. She told me about how she and her family had experienced increasing suffering during the last year on account of political measures allegedly directed at extremists whose version of Islam she could in no way identify with. Although she, as Naqshbandi, adhered to a version of Islam that had been rehabilitated in official discourses, she had often experienced that other people regarded her strong religious devotion with suspicion and had been questioned about it by officials who did not know anything about Islam, 'who could not tell the difference between the Qur'an and the collected works of Lenin', as she put it with a smile.

Like several other of the Naqshbandis I interviewed, Dilfuza also interpreted the idea that 'everything should be *xufiyya*', and the principle of 'solitude in the

crowd' as particularly suitable to a society in which a lot of people were afraid of Islam, and in which any overly explicit expression of devotion to Islam could be misunderstood. As Bibi Raja put it:

> Many people today are afraid of religion because of the Wahhabis. It is difficult. We do not spread our knowledge openly, but only show our good sides. Then sometimes people come to us for advice. But the Naqshbandiyya is *xufiyya*, we should not show off.

Some of the female Naqshbandis I talked with took the theme of the *hijab* up, arguing that the *xufiyya* character of the *tariqa* made it unnecessary for them to wear it. Dilfuza, for example, said that in the Qur'an it is written that women should wear *hijab*. But if she wore it in the bazaar, where she worked selling clothes, many people would be suspicious. That did not work. The Naqshbandiyya had taught her that wearing the *hijab* is not the most important anyway. The most important is to have a clean heart. A woman wearing a *hijab* can also be a hypocrite.

Sometimes it was difficult for me to tell whether they believed that avoiding proselytizing and avoiding such explicit signs of devotion as the *hijab* were in fact a fundamental part of Naqshbandiyya's teaching, or whether these strategies were primarily a necessary adaptation to the way post-Soviet society worked. They were ambiguous here too, and that may be the point.

7 Imagining time

Time and order

For a long time, discourses on Islam in Central Asia have been pervaded by tropes of time. As mentioned in the introduction, Soviet ideology subjugated Islam to an interpretational framework which held that the evolutionary path to socialism would eventually eliminate religion and give way to a thoroughly rational, secular outlook. The fact that religious practices and beliefs continued to exist in spite of the fact that they should have been in decline was most often explained by the thesis that social consciousness is more conservative than social being, and that survivals or remnants of earlier forms of consciousness can be found in more developed societies. Religion was made a past relic irrelevant to modern concerns.

The ideology of national independence launched by the post-Soviet Uzbek government, has also subjugated Islam to an interpretational framework pervaded by tropes of time. On 6 April 2000 a conference on national ideology issues took place at the presidential residence in Tashkent. Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, chaired the meeting, which was attended by prominent scholars as well as members of the cultural and religious elites. During the meeting, Karimov gave a speech in which he talked about what he conceived as the indispensability of a well-defined ideology for the nation-building process and asked for the conference participants' help in defining it:

> Any nation or society that wishes to see and build a bright future for itself must base itself upon and rely upon its own national idea. Any society that fails to rely upon its own national idea is certain to collapse and lose its path [. . .] We are living in a period of transition from a despotic and totalitarian system to a free and independent system. We should all be aware of the fact that the transition period will encounter major obstacles and hurdles and will experience great struggles. We need to have our objectives clear in this period, for us to lead our people and society to new horizons and campaign them for this. Such objectives may be achieved through a thoroughly thought-out and well-built idea [. . .] In order not to lose our path in conducting step-by-step a policy that suits our educational and spiritual

> interests and moral life and, if need be, our national interests, we must not allow any ideological vacuum to exist. For the greatest and most influential battles of all are being fought in the ideological arena [. . .] It would be no exaggeration if I say that the fact that our young people are coming to follow false ideas poses the greatest threat to us. That is why we need our own national idea like the air we breathe and the water we drink.[1]

The establishment of empire requires the colonization of time, the rule of memory (Norton 1993). In his speech, Karimov conjured up a picture of a society travelling along a troublesome path that leads towards a bright future, but which is paved with dangers and battles to be fought and full of blind alleys. He depicts a society caught in a phase of liminality between a well-defined past – the 'despotic and totalitarian' Soviet state – and an equally well-defined 'free and independent' future: between the temporal interruption of colonialism and alienation, on the one hand, and homecoming and freedom on the other. He appealed to the nation's intellectuals as guides who were to lead the wayfarers along the right path, providing them with the means necessary to cope with the threats and temptations they would encounter, the most serious of these being people offering seductive 'false ideas'.

Indeed, government discourses in Uzbekistan have persistently drawn a picture of a nation going through a vulnerable liminal phase in which the forces of good and evil fight over the hearts and minds of people. Foreign evil and destructive forces – notably 'Wahhabis' or 'extremists' promoting anachronistic, anti-modern versions of Islam – are ready to take advantage of a temporary moral and ideological vacuum in order to obstruct the nation's path toward a great future. A home-grown 'Muslimness' essential to the Uzbek national character though partly forgotten and necessary for the government to restore plays a key part in this path toward a great future. The people's ignorance of the proper, local understanding of Islam is a remnant of the Soviet years.

Time is a principle for ordering reality, for regulating life. As such, time can also be an instrument or technology of power. Time is a bearer of significance through which people conceptualize relations between Selves and Others (cf. Fabian 1983). In attaching predicates such as 'primordial', 'ancient', 'anachronistic', 'modern' or 'forgotten' to phenomena or calling them 'remnants', the political establishment in Uzbekistan presents evaluations of the present. The political elites try to convince listeners which parts of reality they should engage in, and which parts of reality they should disengage from. Calling phenomena 'anachronisms' and treating them as such is a way of 'othering' them, of marking their distance from the social and moral order of the present, denying them coexistence in the same world. Calling phenomena 'ancient' is a way of investing phenomena with the moral authority of the past. Labelling phenomena 'modern' is a way of giving them a seal of approval, affirming their relevance to the present order. Calling them 'forgotten' is a way of justifying state intervention in the moral life of people. And by speaking in terms of 'transition' political elites seek to create a sense for the Uzbek citizens that even the most

troublesome and painful experiences they are living through are necessary, though relatively insignificant, passing moments in a great story about transformation – or 'transition', as the 'phase' or 'period' post-socialist countries have entered is usually termed. A story which is not only about personal transformation, but also about their nation's realization of its supreme destiny, its way from the present state of social discord and cultural confusion left in the wake of foreign forces (cf. Herzfeld 1997: 112) to national resurrection and prosperity – and revival of the forgotten 'Muslimness'. Through such narrative processes official discourses strategically emplot past and present actions, states of affairs and the perceived inner worlds of experience of the Uzbek citizens, relating them to potential future scenarios in order to convince these citizens of the necessity of a particular political order, and in order to guide their actions to fit into this order.[2]

Also in everyday Islam in post-Soviet Bukhara discourses on time and discourses on Islam intermingle. This does not mean that everyday Islam in Uzbekistan is overdetermined by official discourses. Tropes of time are prevalent in both official and in everyday discourses, but they are used to talk about a variety of things and thereby given varieties of meaning. It is a matter of continuous negotiation which concrete phenomena are remnants to be overcome, and which are collective memories to be invoked; which phenomena are primordial, old-fashioned, modern, traditional, anachronistic or forgotten; which phenomena should be regarded as signs of proper 'Muslimness', and which phenomena should be regarded as signs of moral amnesia. As I will argue in this chapter, tropes of time are general formal frameworks through which people express and interpret various experiences, generate various meanings, conceptualize relations between Selves and Others and negotiate how the present should be; which realities are worth engaging in, and how the overall make-up of this society ought to be.

Shrines as chronotropes

As mentioned in Chapter 3, living saints do not constitute any important factor in present-day Uzbekistan. Living saints do play a role in the imaginary horizon of some people in the sense that they find it quite likely that there might be *avliyo* living amongst them. But, they say, they would never know, as real *avliyo* never show off, and as they never call themselves *avliyo*; they are frequently not even aware themselves that they are *avliyo*, and they – if they did know – would definitely never reveal to anyone that they were *avliyo*. Real *avliyo* are only known as such after their death. If a person unambiguously declared him or herself *avliyo*, that would be considered a sign of madness at best. People do not know, but they do find signs of or sense a possible saintly status in the practice of charismatic people, both those in their immediate lifeworld and those whom they know through the media. President Karimov was a person that I heard mentioned as possibly being *avliyo* several times by people who (in line with official representations) presented him as the man who brought Islam back to Uzbekistan,

and Uzbekistan back to Islam. Also Bobo Tesha (cf. Chapter 6) was considered a possible *avliyo* by many Naqshbandis.

Most people with whom I discussed *avliyo*, however, seemed to find the idea that there could be *avliyo* – embodiments of ideal 'Muslimness' – living amongst them almost absurd, the light emanating from Bukhara notwithstanding. More specifically, they found the idea of the existence of living *avliyo* incompatible with the state of present-day society. This was a society whose knowledge of Islam had been eroded during the 70 years of Soviet rule: 'Before, *avliyo* were very strong . . . if you saw them, your heart would break. Who are we? After 70 years in the Soviet Union?' as a young man said. In this society, people's knowledge might very well be extensive, but it is of a fundamentally different nature from the knowledge *avliyo* possess. As an elderly man said to support his argument that there are no living saints in Uzbekistan today:

> *Avliyo* have had their hearts opened by God's knowledge. This is a kind of knowledge that cannot be reached by reading, studying. Today, there are many people with great knowledge, but it is not the knowledge of God; it does not serve anything good.

People found the existence of living *avliyo* incompatible with a present-day society in which economic difficulties and material temptations distracted people's attention from God. As a middle-aged female *domlo* told me, answering my question about whether there are any *avliyo* in Bukhara today: 'No . . . Today people have turned their feelings towards money instead. Today, people have many problems; they want new clothes, furniture and . . . all sorts of things, and they do not have time for religion.' They found the existence of living *avliyo* incongruent with a society whose complexity made it impossible to live a life according to the will of God, even for those who wished to do so, because it was difficult to distinguish good from bad, *halal* from *haram*. As a Naqshbandi woman explained:

> These *avliyo* only ate things that were *halal.* And because they were very clean, evil light did not come to them. They became light themselves. They protected their eyes. That is, they did not see any unclean things. They did not hear any words that are *haram* according to the *shari'a*. But today it is different. For example, we eat in the street because we work. We do not know whether our food is *halal* or *haram*. We hear evil words, and we see evil things around us. Therefore we cannot achieve the same result as them. Even if spirits come and warn us, 'Do not eat this!' we do not sense it, because our hearts are not open to this kind of knowledge.

Most people found that those who alluded to their own saintly status were corrupt, unconvincing liars and charlatans who did so for the sake of money and status: 'They only behave well when people see it. When nobody sees them, their acts are evil. In order to be *avliyo* your heart and tongue have to say the same thing', as a woman commented.

Because true sainthood and spirituality were projected into the past, *avliyo* not only represented thresholds between human beings and God, but also between the present and an ideal past. And much like the inner journey undertaken by the Naqshbandi *murid*, entering the space of a shrine for the visitors implied not only the entrance into sacred space; it was also a virtual time travel. Encounters with *avliyo* in dreams and visions which were believed to be granted to people with pure hearts were also a form of time travel. Bahodir, one of my Bukhara acquaintances, had been granted such encounters several times.

Dreaming a charismatic self

Bahodir was a man in his late thirties who served as *domlo* at the shrine of Imom Xoja Baror and had been doing so for about a year when I met him in 1998. The time immediately after independence had been hard for him. He was a bricklayer, but after a period of illness he had not been able to find any work and instead 'sat at home', as the situation of being unemployed is commonly termed. He turned to drinking and became notorious in his neighbourhood for being able to drink one-and-a-half bottles of vodka a day. Then, one day in 1997, something happened that was to change his life. Burdened with illness and debt and shunned by his surroundings, he had started paying frequent visits to several of Bukhara's *avliyo.* One night he decided to sleep at the shrine of Imom Xoja Baror, a place where his father used to take him at night when he was a child. He hoped that the saint would show up in his dreams and give him counsel and strength that could help him out of his troubles. 'I fell asleep', Bahodir told me,

> and suddenly I saw a figure in a ray of light. That was Imom Xoja Baror. Imom Xoja Baror said that just as he himself had been one of those men . . . one of those links who for the first time connected Bukhara with the Islamic world, I should take part in bringing Islam back to Bukhara again. 'Listen to Bahouddin Naqshband's motto, Bahodir', he said, 'the heart with God; the hand at work! Tomorrow you must start rebuilding this place in order that it may again be visible to all the world [. . .] and you must serve the people who come here!' Then he disappeared.

Bahodir's dream is reminiscent of a range of similar dreams and revelatory experiences that I was told about during my fieldwork – dreams and revelatory experiences which were commonly believed to be dangerous to reveal to others, but which people nevertheless frequently spoke of. In these dreams and revelations, the dreamer or the medium of the revelation sees a figure, as a rule dressed in white or appearing in a ray of light. The figure, which is interpreted as a saint or a prophet, provides the dreamer with more or less explicit warnings or predictions about future events, and gives advice or instructions for actions that the dreamer should undertake in order to bring a desirable future about. Such dreams and revelations are often the basis for decision making and action and have the power to change radically a person's life. As Katherine Pratt Ewing has

argued in an interesting article about dreams of spiritual initiation among Pakistani Sufis (Ewing 1990), a dream has the power to transform the dreamer's self-representations by providing new signs in terms of which the self can be articulated. In societies where dreams are considered significant, a particular structure of signs with a consensually agreed-upon significance is available for the dreamer to draw upon to shape and organize the manifest content of a dream. The manifest content of the dream simultaneously replicates a cultural model and expresses the dreamer's idiosyncratic concerns in a cultural idiom that may be socially communicated. These concerns can be understood as a desire to establish a self-image that is congruent with the dreamer's current circumstances and that facilitates his resolution of persistent personal conflicts. The new signs provided in a dream point toward the future. They may alter the dreamer's interactions and relationships with others, becoming nodes around which nascent representations of self and others are formed which will affect many of the dreamer's subsequent actions and interactions with others. The dream may become a vehicle for articulating a particular self-representation, and associated representations of others (ibid.).

The significance of the content of a dream – that is to say, the power of the dream to generate social action – ultimately depends on the subsequent interactions between the dreamer and others in particular situations, on the social acceptance awarded the new self-representation. The new self-representation may be developed and consolidated in subsequent interactions, or it may not be and so lose its salience. The dream itself may become a central episode in a dreamer's account of himself, appearing readily in dialogue with, for instance, the inquiring anthropologist, or it may disappear from view if the self-representation which it helped to constitute has not been socially developed or reinforced (ibid.: 58).

For a long time Bahodir had been experiencing marginality in relation to the social world that surrounded him, and he was now in search of a way out of this marginality. The dream he had that night drew the contours of a new charismatic self constituted by engagement in a sacred task and by the denunciation of the worldly games in relation to which he had become marginalized, and with which he had become more disillusioned. In an imitation of acts of a distant past in which the sacred had regularly erupted into history, Bahodir then broke down the wall that had blocked the access to the mausoleum for a long time, put in the door from his own house and started restoring the decayed place. After that, he told me, he recovered his health, stopped drinking, paid off his debt and had since been able to maintain his family – a wife and four children – by building tombs at the burial place which surrounds the shrine and by praying for the visitors to the shrine. Other people also stopped shunning him – like an old man who used to torment Bahodir with his gossip:

> This old man always talked badly about me. Then he had a dream . . . In the dream the Prophet came and told him that he should not spread evil gossip about [me]: '[Bahodir] is a good man with a pure heart', he told him. And

> [the Prophet] told him that I had not come by myself, but that he had sent me. Then, in the morning when he woke up, he immediately came to me and apologized.

This dream which supported Bahodir's new self-representation and his claim to charisma was one that he liked to tell visitors about. It contained a hint that he was engaged in a task that had a kind of divine blessing and that he thus deserved respect. The old man who had formerly entertained people with 'bad talk' about Bahodir now told them about his dream. Some of these people, according to Bahodir, had started to visit the shrine of Imom Xoja Baror regularly and to ask Bahodir to help them with their prayers.

Post-Soviet morality

The burial site was a pleasant and quiet place, and there was a good view of the city from the shrine, which was situated at its highest point. Bahodir was very friendly and talkative when I came there with my interpreters, and we would usually spend a couple of hours talking and drinking tea at the shrine, or at one of the tombs he was building when he was not busy praying for people there. Bahodir often told me miracle stories – mainly about miracles he himself had experienced as *domlo* at the shrine, and stories that visitors had told him when they came to express their gratitude for the granting of a wish: stories about unmarried girls who had suddenly been assailed by marriage proposals, about childless couples who had been blessed with children, about poor people who were suddenly seen eating at expensive restaurants, about incurably ill people having been cured – and so on. However, like many other *domlo*s he also frequently complained that the hopes and wishes that were articulated at the shrine indicated that people today were following a mistaken course of life that they had the wrong priorities. One day he told me about something he had read in a book about a man who in Soviet times had performed *chilla* at the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine:

> For 39 days he prayed to God about giving people knowledge. On the 40th day, Bahouddin's spirit came to him and said that God had left Uzbekistan for 70 years, but after 70 years everything would again be as before.

I asked Bahodir if that had actually happened: if everything had actually become like it was in pre-Soviet times; if people had gained knowledge. '*Avliyo*, mosques, *madrasa*s have been built and restored again, and people are again allowed to come here', he answered,

> but look at the *tug'*. The hand symbolizes the five duties . . . When Alexander the Great died, he asked his people to bury him in a grave with a hand erected on the top. That meant that he did not bring along money and wealth to God. That means that we go there without wealth and other things; our

> hands are empty [. . .] Our modern people, our youth, do not pay attention to their *avliyo*, but only to money and other problems, child-rearing, a rich future and other things. If you are here, if you pray, you have to forget all such problems.

Bahodir often talked about morality, about good and evil, about what to do and what not to do according to genuine Uzbek 'Muslimness'. He asked me about the use of alcohol in Denmark, and about my drinking habits. When I answered him that I drink alcohol occasionally, he reproached me and told me about the evils of alcohol with all the fervour of an ex-alcoholic. He probed into my motives for conducting my research project – whether I did what I did for the sake of money, or for the sake of knowledge. He questioned me whether I would rather marry a rich and evil man than a poor man with a pure heart – and so on.

He would often resort to hagiographic narratives to put what he saw as modern people's misguided priorities into perspective. Not surprisingly, one of his favourite saints was Imom Xoja Baror, with whom he considered his own life to be closely related, and whose hagiography served as an important source of inspiration to him. As hinted at in Bahodir's dream, and as mentioned in Chapter 4, Imom Xoja Baror played an important role in making Bukhara's inhabitants convert to Islam. Bahodir likewise saw it as his sacred task to help bring Islam back to Bukhara in a physical as well as a moral sense. Reconquering the hearts and minds of the people, however, appeared to be more difficult than rebuilding the shrine:

> Once, a king went to this place to speak with Imom Xoja Baror. [Imom Xoja Baror's] assistant, however, told the king that he could not speak with [Imom Xoja Baror], because even though the king was superior to Imom Xoja Baror regarding worldly power and wealth, [Imom Xoja Baror] was superior to the king regarding morality and spirituality. The king denied that, but when he stepped into the mosque, suddenly he could neither talk nor move. He stayed on the same spot the whole day, powerless, and when evening came, Imom Xoja Baror allowed him to go, and he went out and told [Imom Xoja Baror] that he respected him [. . .] You see, money . . . wealth and power, that is not necessary, not important [. . .] But people do not understand this . . . people nowadays.

Today, people did not even have the living example of the *avliyo* to inspire their lives. Like most other people I discussed this with during my fieldwork, Bahodir found it unlikely that there were any living saints in present-day Uzbekistan, although he did mention President Karimov as possibly being *avliyo* on one occasion, in the light of what he understood to be Karimov's great efforts to bring Islam back to Uzbekistan.

If there were most likely no living saints in present-day Uzbekistan, saints of past times sometimes appeared in the dreams of people with pure hearts.

Bahodir was frequently granted such dreams. Since the day back in 1997 when Imom Xoja Baror came to him in his dream, Bahodir had regularly received messages in dreams from Imom Xoja Baror as well as various other *avliyo* who provided him with advice about how to lead his life and how to relate to people around him. He also pointed out that he usually knew when I would come to talk with him, as he had been informed about that in his dreams. On one such occasion he had also been informed that he should invite me to join him for a *ziyorat* to the Xoja Ka'bul Ahror Vali shrine, around 20 kilometres from Bukhara. I gratefully accepted his invitation, but had some problems getting a field assistant for the trip. At the last moment I was introduced to Anvar, a young man who, as it turned out, was a convinced atheist. The chemistry between him and Bahodir was a disaster from the beginning. On the day of our trip, Anvar showed up wearing a death metal-style t-shirt with cool stuff like skulls and motorbikes – which Bahodir immediately started commenting on and scolding Anvar for, pointing out that it was of Satanic origin. When we arrived at the shrine and started interviewing the *domlo* there, it turned out that Anvar knew neither Uzbek nor Tajik well enough to be able to translate to and from these languages. Anvar then switched to Russian, but the *domlo* kept on switching back to Uzbek, as there were things he simply could not explain in Russian, he said. Then the *domlo* spoke Uzbek, which Bahodir and the taxi driver translated to Russian while also explaining concepts like *avliyo*, *payghambar* (prophet) and *zikr* to him. Anvar, obviously put under strain by the whole situation, gave me an incoherent English translation. Several times, Bahodir and the *domlo* interrupted the interview and started reproaching Anvar's 'lack of knowledge' and asking me where Baxtiyor, my other field assistant, was. Anvar replied by not holding back his scornful laughter when he translated the colourful story about Xoja Ka'bul Ahror Vali, who according to the *domlo* lived for 4,444 years, met four prophets and was 28 metres high.

Afterwards, we went back to Bukhara and had lunch. Bahodir continued admonishing Anvar for his 'lack of knowledge' and went on to talk in general terms about the religious amnesia which characterized society, the lack of fear of God which led people to do evil things and commit sins of all sorts – and blamed the '70 Soviet years', the atheist propaganda and all the things that now tempted people; all the expensive American and European things like cars, clothes and stuff that people now wanted, and which blinded their hearts. No wonder there were no *avliyo* living in Bukhara these days. Both Anvar and I felt that he saw us as incarnations of all the evil he preached against.

Marginality and transcendence

Unlike Tohir (cf. Chapter 5), whose inability to live up to society's ideals about how to perform masculinity the proper way had somehow left him paralysed, cautiously confronting the world through reactive, tactical agency, Bahodir had managed to transform his marginality to some extent; he had turned his position as an outcast into an advantage. He was striving to disengage from the social

games of the world, in which he had had no success in any case, in order to be subjected only to God and to *avliyo* of past times, manifesting past powers and past morality in the present. He seemed to be striving to become recognized as a charismatic, a person standing above and beyond the social context in which he lived, having knowledge of the games that people around him were immersed in, but being emotionally detached from them, not sharing their illusio. And as such he would become an example for others to imitate, thus transforming the normative for others too, creating a space from which the established world could be judged and acted on in terms other than its own (cf. Comaroff 1994: 306).

In spite of all his efforts Bahodir was not particularly convincing in his claim to charisma. In other words, his existence as charismatic rested on a very fragile foundation. There were a few people who seemed to recognize his diagnosis of social reality in their own lifeworlds, regularly visiting Imom Xoja Baror when they knew Bahodir was there, letting him pray for them, listening to his advice, letting themselves be influenced by him. Others, however, continued treating him as an outcast. Anvar considered Bahodir to be clearly mad and refused to join me for further interviews. Similarly, other people with whom I discussed Bahodir believed that he was not right in the head, but suffered from the delusion that he was *avliyo* (which, they pointed out, he obviously was not – who had ever heard of an *avliyo* who had spent several years of his life as an alcoholic?). There were people who brought another *domlo* to say the prayers when they paid *ziyorat* to Imom Xoja Baror while Bahodir was there – much to Bahodir's regret. When one such incident happened while I was there, he started talking in allegories about people who knew their prayers to perfection, but whose hearts were dark, and about the Day of Judgment when they would be called to account. And when a snake suddenly fell from the roof of the building the tomb was situated in, Bahodir took it as a sign from God that these people were indeed evil and told me to hide my notebook, as it was full of sacred words that might attract the evil eye which would spoil my work.

Time is money

Perhaps because he was only partially successful, the claim to charisma was not the only strategy Bahodir pursued in order to create a satisfying social existence. There were times when he showed a more accommodating attitude towards the present, that is, to those things to which he was present (cf. Bourdieu 2000: 210). At these times he seemed to approach the social games of the world around him in their own terms and did his best to help the visitors to the shrine in doing so, thus confirming that they were worth engaging in. Another favourite saint of Bahodir's was Bahouddin Naqshband. 'What is a *wali*?'[3] he once rhetorically asked and continued, answering the question:

> There are people who believe that when they let their beards grow, or when they wear *hijab* . . . that this will make them good people; that this will make them true Muslims. But the *hijab* can hide much evil. For example . . .

> when you look at me, you think, 'he is a bricklayer.' But each time I lay down a brick, God fills my heart; with each brick I worship God. A *wali* never forgets God. With everything he does he worships God. But it is impossible to see that he is *wali* [. . .] Like Bahouddin Naqshband said, 'The heart with God, the hand at work.' That is the way a good Muslim should live.

However, this periodic engagement in the surrounding society on its own terms also raised suspicion at times. It made some people doubt the sincerity of his motives for serving as a shrine guardian. Maybe he just did it for the sake of the money he received from the visitors for whom he prayed? In reply Bahodir would insist that all his worldly pursuits were connected with God. Bahodir had not entered the Naqshbandiyya, but like many others in post-Soviet Bukhara, he had studied aspects of Naqshbandiyya's teaching and embraced them in an eclectic manner: he often quoted proverbs attributed to Bahouddin Naqshband and stories about him to me, explaining that he tried to lead his life the way that they dictated. He had tried to perform *chilla*, but had been forced to give up after only three days, as he lost his concentration. He also had got into the habit of performing some sort of home-made inner *zikr* when he built tombs, or when he bicycled around the city and its surroundings, paying *ziyorat* to other shrines: his heart would praise God – 'Allah, Allah' – in time with his bricklaying and his pedalling, assimilating the eternal moral order of the universe to the tempo of social life. He liked the idea that Bahouddin had not turned his back on the world, but had worked in order to support himself and his family while keeping God in his heart all the while – as he himself tried to do:

> In Soviet times, many people earned their salaries without actually working. Today that will not do. Bahouddin reminds people that they have to work for their living. When God is in your heart, your work is also a prayer for God. Our president has also understood that. In order to make Uzbekistan a great nation we have to work and keep God in our hearts at the same time.

'Time is money', he also said reluctantly and laughingly on his way back to the tomb he was in the process of building at the burial ground – apparently the only sentence in his English vocabulary except for 'I love you', and a sentence which seemed to indicate that the passage of time was not something that had made people forget their essential 'Muslimness', but something that brought hope for a better existence; something that indeed had been conductive to the reintroduction of 'Muslimness' into society.

And sometimes when he received visitors at the shrine he would start telling stories about people who had miraculously had their wishes fulfilled and their hopes realized, even though these stories reflected priorities which he had previously lamented. He assured visitors that their wishes would come true too. I once overheard a conversation Bahodir had with an elderly woman who came to pray at the shrine. She told him that she was worried about her son who had

been unlucky in business and who therefore could not afford to hold the weddings of his daughters. She wished that she could help him, but she had only her meagre pension to live on. With a sarcastic attitude she showed me the decorations that covered her chest, indicating her Soviet-era status as hero-worker and mother. 'What are they worth today?' she asked rhetorically. Bahodir assured the woman that everything would soon be all right, as Imom Xoja Baror had often helped people in the same situation as her son. He also advised the woman to pay *ziyorat* to the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine as well; pointing out that Bahouddin Naqshband was an even greater *avliyo*, who would certainly help the woman's son in his business because he had worked himself.

As shown earlier in the context of Feruza's explanation for her choice of the shrine of Bahouddin Naqshband as the place to pray for her son also (see Chapter 5), Bahouddin Naqshband is known for his appreciation of honest work. Stories also circulate which accentuate his modesty and his spiritual power as opposed to the financial and physical power so significant in this world. The fact that he did not turn his back on the world was, however, what people in Bukhara most often put forward as relevant to contemporary life and a reason to seek out Bahouddin Naqshband for help and inspiration. This was also something that Bahodir emphasized from time to time. He himself had not turned his back on the world but was able to support his family by building tombs at the burial place where Imom Xoja Baror's shrine was situated. That he was able to do so – after all the years of illness, 'sitting at home' and drinking – was something he saw as a sign of God's blessing.

Struggling along

Like Tohir and many other men in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, he was unemployed in a society where masculine identity was bound up with the ability to provide for one's family, and at a time where industriousness was equalled with patriotism, service to the country, and where inflation and the breakdown of the former Soviet welfare system had made unemployment benefits worth next to nothing. For some years it seemed that Bahodir had thrown in the towel and found an escape in the bottle – vodka being still available in Uzbekistan at very low, subsidized prices or brewed at home. Then a dream-encounter with a saint made him question the illusio of the social games he was marginal to and helped him imagine new games within which to constitute and articulate his agency. He was, however, only partially successful in gaining acceptance for his new charismatic self, in having his new way of telling his story recognized and given legitimacy, and perhaps he was also cautious not to draw too much attention to himself as a charismatic religious authority outside the religious establishment. In the field of religion in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, where the stakes are religious knowledge and charisma, too much success can amount to failure; setting oneself too much above the surrounding society can be interpreted as a sign of anti-state sentiments. And so he struggled along (cf. Desjarlais 1996b), wavering between standing above the social games of society, using past knowledge to

judge them, and using past knowledge and power to engage in them, considering all his small victories to be signs of God's blessing.

Time and narrative

As for Bahodir, shrines for people in post-Soviet Bukhara are not only meeting points between the divine and the mundane, but also between past, present and future. *Avliyo*, for them, essentially belong elsewhere in time. They are signs, not only of the sacred as eternal, transcendent of time, but also of the sacred as manifested in a golden past. This constitutes them as chronotropes, icons of 'structural nostalgia' (cf. Chapter 3), just as official discourses would have it, though not always icons of the same kind of past. Sometimes the golden past is a time before time, an indeterminate and semi-mythical past – this was the way Bahodir usually talked about it – whereas some people are more specific, talking about the age of the Samanids, or the age of Amir Timur. More at variance with official nationalist narratives, some people place the golden age within the reach of their memory – in the Soviet period, a period which is depicted as an alienating interruption in official narratives. Less disillusioned people express hopes that *avliyo* will again begin to appear in a future in which Bukhara will reappear as the *Buxoroi Sharif* it was before. In short, *avliyo* are very much present, but present as meaningful absences – embodying nostalgia for the past and hopes for the future – or, at most, hidden possibilities in the present. And they are triggers of reflections and narratives by way of which people locate, and make sense of, present lifeworlds in larger spans of time.

Time, argues Pierre Bourdieu, usually passes unnoticed. People are immersed in the games of the world and their forthcoming (Bourdieu 2000: 207). But when there is discrepancy between what is anticipated and the logic of the game in relation to which this anticipation was formed, the engagement with the practical sense of the forthcoming of the world gives way to time objectified, and relations to time such as waiting, impatience, regret, nostalgia, boredom and discontent come into being (Bourdieu 2000: 208–9). Bourdieu does not grant such objectified relations to time much attention, possibly because he does not grant them much significance as social phenomena.[4]

According to Cheryl Mattingly (1998), experience is usually narrative because actors in their everyday lives are continually engaged in emplotting events in temporal, teleological wholes which, far from creating any simple 'coherence' that distorts lived experience, in fact mirror the dramas of the lived experience of social life – its conflicts, obstacles to be overcome, enemies to be faced, risks to be taken, moments of suffering, uncertainty and suspense, encounters with the unexpected, collusions between expectations and unfolding events. At the same time, narrative also creates a sense of these experiences and events as being moments in a much larger time horizon, in a story towards which they are heading and which they have some influence in bringing about (ibid.: 64, 84–96). Our orientation in time is an orientation towards a future. The meaning of the present is always a temporal situatedness between a past and a

future which we await and strive to bring about, and which saturates each present moment with meaning (ibid.: 93).

During my fieldwork I found that life for the people I came to know was full of traces or reminders of what was desired but absent. In other words, absences saturated the present with a strange kind of meaning: the meaning of something which is not there, but which is nevertheless present enough to be missed, remembered with nostalgia or desired. By way of imagination – an act of making present what is absent (cf. Mattingly 1998: 39) – they located the objects of desire behind the traces not only in more or less distant futures, but also in more or less distant pasts. They longed for paradises lost or forgotten, the traces of which were manifested in shrines or dream-encounters with the souls of *avliyo* of past times as well as in sudden childhood memories, in the unexpected altruistic actions of a stranger, or in feelings and intuitions they were not fully able to understand. They longed for paradises hoped-for, the traces of which were manifested in the promising words of a politician, the very first Coca-Cola billboards marking the presence of a market economy in Bukhara, the opening of a *madrasa*, a successful business transaction or, as for Bahodir, in an order for the building of a tomb. These traces which were signs of divine grace were also chronotropes through which people reached out into imagined pasts and futures and created spaces of desire, as well as spaces of nostalgia which in turn guided their actions, lent a directedness to their actions.

Narrative theory has been criticized for making narrative coherence a universal structural characteristic of all action and experience. Robert Desjarlais, for example, has launched a critique of the way the term 'experience' has recently been used in much anthropology. Desjarlais points out that some of the distinguishing features of the term 'experience' – reflexive interiority, hermeneutical depth, narrative flow – are not universal but predicated on a certain way of being in the world, which in turn depends on a proper and durable place; on environments that offer a lasting sense of privacy, in which a person can dwell within his or her own world for some length of time. In extensively public spaces the most common form of being in the world is rather what he terms 'struggling along'. Lacking lasting grounds – spatial, political, economic – on which to stand and proceeding through tactics, people's being in the world has an episodic temporal structure in which future, present and past have little to do with one another, and in which recollections depend on momentary preoccupations more than any deftly woven remembrances of times past (Desjarlais 1996b).

While I am using the term 'experience' in a broad sense[5] that does not necessarily imply reflexive interiority, hermeneutical depth and narrative flow, I believe that Desjarlais is right in his critique. This does not mean that the temporal ordering of experience is not important – as I have described, I found it to be of great significance among the people I met during my fieldwork – but I agree with Desjarlais in that narrative ordering of experience depends on an environment that allows for withdrawal and reflection. Bahodir switched between being prereflexively immersed in the forthcoming of the social fields he engaged in

('struggling along' in Desjarlais' terms), and giving experience some kind of coherent order, putting things in perspective of various imagined futures and pasts when he was able to withdraw from his daily occupations – when visiting sacred space, for example, or in the interview contexts I set up for him. Or, following Mattingly, whose approach is more complex than Desjarlais' critique[6] would suggest, one might say that Bahodir and other people in post-Soviet Bukhara were operating

> from multiple points of view, sometimes with the backward glance of the confident narrator standing at the story's end, sometimes with the bewilderment or naiveté of the partly informed character or audience. They [acted] holding all these perspectives simultaneously, driven forward by images, goals, and plans as though they could foresee the end, but at the same time, immersed in the contingencies of a present which [resisted] the ending.
>
> (Mattingly 1998: 156)

One might also add that apart from an environment that offers a lasting sense of privacy, an opportunity to dwell, the ability to give temporal form to experience also depends on certain forms of cultural competence in an environment in which it makes sense to order experience in this way; in which there is something at stake in it. In the broadest sense narrativization is dependent on a linear time conception, a lineal (as compared with a cyclical) model of human existence. In the context of post-Soviet Uzbekistan it is linked, more specifically, both to the salvatory dimensions of Islam, which in principle make death and the afterlife an ever-present horizon of existence, and with the modernist, evolutionist view of history, which served as a general conceptual framework for ordering phenomena in the Soviet period, and which has continued to be a framework for arguments about which parts of reality were worth engaging in in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. In this context, lacking the cultural competence to give narrative form to experience in the right manner is not only a matter of a lack of cultural understanding, but can also get one into serious trouble, as the wrong narratives can easily be interpreted as critiques of the regime. And although 'transition' might have been a mixed blessing for many people in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, as elsewhere in the post-Socialist world (cf. Hann *et al.* 2002), most of the people I talked with during my fieldwork there would, when asked directly, repeat echoes of official transition narratives, calling the Soviet Union a foreign, repressive imposition and emphasizing that independence had brought national resurrection, revival of Islam, freedom and democracy. Although, as I shall argue, many people expressed Soviet nostalgia occasionally, official transition narratives were seldom questioned directly and unambiguously. Only rarely did I meet people who would unambiguously lament the fall of the Soviet Union and advocate its resurrection. This may have much to do with the fact that most people are afraid to criticize the regime openly and unambiguously. It is also a question of the fact that people only rarely reflect on the nature of history as such in their daily lives. When they are pushed to do so – by an anthropologist, for example – official

narratives are an available resource, the use of which will at least not get them into trouble.

Usually – that is, when people were not asked directly – images of past, present and future were linked with present concerns and therefore changed along with these concerns. Through representations of the past linked with such present concerns, people frequently articulated subtle, though usually accommodating, critiques of the current state of affairs. They did so when they talked about a collective amnesia, the loss of knowledge, which allegedly characterized post-Soviet society.

Amnesia

As pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3, official narratives in post-Soviet Uzbekistan have pictured Uzbek 'Muslimness' as something that *is* there, in people's innermost being. Islam is pictured as an unchangeable essence, but also as something forgotten, and something the government needs to restore from oblivion in order for the nation to realize itself. These narratives conjure up pictures of President Karimov and his government as knowledge liberators who provide people with access to knowledge that has been hidden from them for 70 years. This 'liberation' gives new meanings to Islam. It subjugates it to a nationalist interpretational framework which makes *avliyo* ancestors and their shrines chronotropes of national monumental time, and which makes the practice of *ziyorat* a commemorative ceremony celebrating the nation.

Lost knowledge, or the oblivion usually said to have been caused by the '70 Soviet years' also plays an important part in many Uzbek Muslims' narratives about the role of Islam in their lifeworlds. It may be a very general characteristic of human life that people pursue some kind of knowledge – knowledge being understood in the broadest sense[7] – which, however, will never be sufficient. The sense that there is always, if not much then just a little bit missing from one's life which prevents one from reaching fulfilment may be universal. In Bukhara during my fieldwork, this 'something' missing, lost or forgotten was discursively omnipresent. It figured in people's narratives about the role of Islam in their lifeworlds when they commented on their inability to say their prayers properly, their ignorance of Arabic and their lack of the knowledge of the history of those *avliyo* whose shrines they paid *ziyorat* to. Lost knowledge was also a recurrent theme when they spoke of people's inability to make a living for themselves in post-Soviet society. It was an issue when they commented on other people's engagement in what they found to be superstitious practices, or in 'Wahhabism', making 'the 70 years' account for why they were ignorant or easy to lead astray. And it was an issue when they complained about the general behaviour of their fellow Uzbeks and the moral flaws of society: how the pursuit of money, commodities and social status played a disproportionate role in people's lives, how people were unable to distinguish between good and evil, how state officials and religious authorities were corrupt, and how mutuality and fairness had been replaced by self-interest. It was an issue for Feruza who some-

times talked about the evil intentions and malicious pleasure she found in relations that were supposed to be characterized by solidarity and mutual help, in terms of forgetting, of darkness filling the hearts of people. And it was an issue for Bahodir, who sometimes talked about the wrong priorities among people he lamented so much – the way they were occupied with worldly power and wealth – in terms of the '70 Soviet years' and the lack of knowledge they had caused. Oblivion, some kind of shameful collective amnesia, was discursively omnipresent and thrown into relief by stories about people who had been miraculously capable of learning 'the old books' or 'the old things' (Soviet-time cover names for the Qur'an, *Hadith* as well as any book on Islam) by heart, thereby secretly keeping religious knowledge alive during times when such books were burned or removed to museums in Moscow and Leningrad.

In short, the themes of oblivion and loss of knowledge constituted a kind of discursive black box in which people sometimes located the source of all the ills of their lifeworlds, including their own helplessness in a society that official narratives told them was their home, and the amoral and asocial behaviour of people termed their fellow countrymen.

In explaining experiences of alienation or loss of agency in terms of oblivion or lost knowledge, people expressed their dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in post-Soviet society. The knowledge which was forgotten or lost was not overdetermined by nationalist discourse; that is, people did not always talk of it as some 'national' knowledge that needed to be restored, and they did not always put their faith in the president and his government as primary agents in the restoration of knowledge. Nevertheless, this talk about oblivion and lost knowledge did not seriously question official narratives, but rather accommodated them with what apparently contradicted them: if Uzbeks felt alienated from society, this was not because society alienated them, but because the '70 Soviet years' had made them suffer from amnesia and forget the very essence of their being. If they felt unjustly treated by their fellow countrymen, if these countrymen behaved in a manner that seemed to contradict the ideals of Islam, this was only because these fellow countrymen suffered from amnesia too: God was there inside them, but in some very distant corner of their being that they had forgotten, that time had somehow enveloped in darkness. One might call this a kind of secular theodicy (cf. Herzfeld 1992: 5–7) that explains the presence of evil and the experience of suffering in a society allegedly ruled by progressive forces. Through the discourse of amnesia harsh critiques of the current state of affairs were made, but the past was given the blame for them.

Nostalgia

Those same people who talked about 'those 70 years' having caused amnesia also expressed a profound nostalgia for the Soviet past at times. In other words, they wavered between expressing the view that the Soviet years had destroyed what was now felt to be lacking – knowledge, agency, morality, ability to

distinguish between good and evil – and hinting at the view that what was lost was life as they used to live it back in the Soviet days.

Nostalgia is a feeling experienced when the objects whose presence is desired are no longer there. Nostalgia coloured many people's memories of life under the Soviet system. 'The Soviet past' should not be understood in this context as what actually happened, but rather as a mode of present experience. Memory is not a copy of past events, but a reconstruction of the past formed by new experiences and concerns. Nostalgic memories of the Soviet past were thus usually triggered by specific present concerns: when people were struggling to provide money for their children's schoolbooks, nostalgia coloured their memory of a time when books were provided free of charge. When they confronted such grim aspects of post-Soviet developments as growing social inequality and poverty and the increasing presence of beggars and prostitutes, they regretted the loss of a system in which people's material needs were more adequately fulfilled. When they were frustrated that they could not afford to pursue all the opportunities the opening to the Western world had provided them, being barely able to pay for an hour on the Internet or a bus ticket to the nearest town, nostalgia coloured their memory of a period when travel was at least economically possible, even though most people had only been allowed to travel within the Eastern bloc.

Nostalgia also frequently coloured people's memories of how they had practised Islam in Soviet times. An extreme case was an elderly disillusioned *domlo* who told me that nothing had been the same since the end of the days of the last *avliyo*, Josef Stalin. In Stalin's times, he pointed out, there were no criminals, as people were arrested and sent to Siberia for stealing as little as one kopek. When Stalin died, Bukhara was flooded by the tears the women of the city cried for him. Since then, criminals had been ruling the country, and nobody was able to distinguish between *halal* and *haram* any more. It was more common to draw a picture of the Soviet years as a time when people might have been deprived of much of their intellectual knowledge of Islam, when they might have denied the existence of God and declared themselves atheists to accommodate, but when they had kept God in their hearts, in their innermost being, essentially remaining Muslims though this remained unnoticed by those who did not sense it. Most Muslims I knew in Uzbekistan seemed to take delight in telling stories about how they had kept on practising their religion against all odds in Soviet times, just as Bahodir did when he spoke of how his father had brought him to the shrine of Imom Xoja Baror when he was a child. I have already discussed how people told stories about how they practised *ziyorat* at night at places they knew were relatively safe, at places they knew were sacred although they were destroyed or converted to secular use, or by couching their activity in accepted terms like 'tourism' or 'studies in ancient architecture'. People also told stories about how they read their prayers in secret behind closed doors and windows, and about how they had unauthorized clerics come and lead rituals related to birth, circumcision, marriage and death, or rituals such as the *Osh Bibiyo*. They told how they had been instructed in or intuited which Party officials or schoolteachers they could trust. And they told stories about how unauthorized *mullah*s

taught them the 'old books' or the 'old things' in provisional schools set up in private homes. An elderly woman laughingly told me a story about how her neighbour, an *oymullo* (female *mullah*),[8] used to teach her 'the old things' in secret: she would wait until night fell and then discreetly knock on the thin wall between her family's and the *oymullo*'s apartment. If the *oymullo* knocked back, this was a sign that her husband was sleeping. As a Party member he had too much to lose if his wife's activities were discovered, and therefore he had forbidden her to teach (the elderly woman's theory, however, was that he knew what went on at night, but that he turned a blind, or rather sleeping, eye to it). If she heard the sign, she went to their apartment, bringing some food that they could eat while the teaching went on. Now these nights had become one of her best childhood memories. When memories of such 'little events' and the experiential spaces they took place within are triggered they frequently have the power to colour the memory of a whole epoch.

The coding characterizing most religious practices seems to have been a source of bonding between people, a sign of complicity (among relatives, neighbours, circles of friends and colleagues – and sometimes with local officials) that many remember with nostalgia and undoubtedly a measure of romanticization. It seems to have been a sign of an ability to see through the apparent surface of things and into their true and unchangeable essence: to recognize the shrine behind the architecture, the Qur'an behind the 'old things', the Muslim heart in the loyal Party official. Many Uzbek Muslims remember this complicity with nostalgia and are happy to reminisce. With independence many hoped that not only the underground practice of Islam, but also the sense of complicity and common sociality attached to the underground practice and encoding of Islam would 'surface': that a clear 'us' would crystallize as a social world where one could feel at home. No clear 'us' surfaced, however, and therefore independence has been experienced as a loss of hope for the future by many Uzbeks. In any case, the hopes that many pinned on independence have not been matched by the way events have actually unfolded. It is telling that unlike the stories told about how people practised their religion against all odds in Soviet times – stories told with the backward glance of the confident narrator standing at the story's end – stories about how fears of being accused of religious extremism impinge on the practice of religion in present-day Uzbekistan are told reluctantly, fragmentarily, often in whispers.

Some people simply did not follow official narratives in their representations of the Soviet period, for example, some still referred to Moscow as 'our capital' and to the Lenin mausoleum there as 'our Lenin mausoleum'; some were still wearing decorations received in Soviet times, although these insignia, which had previously marked a person's existence as positive, which had marked one as *someone*,[9] do not carry the same meaning any longer, and are not recognized by everyone, and especially not the younger generation. Many people did not see any fundamental incongruence between Soviet ideology and Islam. For example, there was the woman in whose company I passed a faded *Mir* – the Russian word for peace – wall painting a couple of times: on both occasions she

pointed at the wall painting and told me that this was what Islam was all about – something 'those Wahhabis' had completely misunderstood. I also occasionally met elderly people who referred to Lenin and Stalin as *avliyo*. And for many people, although they identified themselves as Muslims and Uzbeks, their memories and sense of identity were also stored in objects like photographs that showed them as children in Soviet pioneer summer camps, as tourists visiting the Red Square and the Lenin mausoleum, or as soldiers in the uniform of the Soviet army.

Hope

Hope, like nostalgia and a sense of amnesia, can be understood as a reflexive form of being in time: more specifically, hope is projection into imagined futures. As Galina Lindquist has formulated it, hope is a faculty that allows people to cope and persevere in coping with danger and in the face of pervasive distrust (Lindquist 2000: 317; see also Chapter 9).

Although they had seen their lives slipping after independence, most people also expressed hopes for the future at least occasionally, hoping that time was on their side. Hope, I will argue, is triggered by and linked to what might be termed signs of the future: phenomena that are somehow taken as omens of how the future will develop. Although many people, when asked about their hopes for the future, pointed out that one ought not speculate about the future, and that the future was something only God knew about, in practice they were often on the lookout for omens. Even though people stated that making predictions about the future was irrational and forbidden according to Islam, *avliyo* would often show up in their dreams with such predictions, which they could then pin their hopes on. The political establishment also used the government-controlled media to direct people's attention towards events and phenomena that somehow stood out from the misery of the present – the inauguration of a new prestigious building project in the capital, the successful performance of Uzbek athletes in international competitions, the awarding of scholarships abroad to Uzbek students or of medals and honour to country workers for their extraordinary performance during the cotton harvest and the like, and point to them as omens of a glorious future, trying in this way to put the illusio of the nation – and the government as an incarnation of the nation – forward as the overriding illusio for Uzbek citizens to commit themselves to.

However, it did not seem to me that the government had been particularly successful with this project of breeding the hope necessary for people to believe in the happy ending of a story the present moment of which was hard to endure for many of them. Hope needs to be fed with more than the compulsory reading of the collected works of the president, or television broadcasts of the great achievements of fellow countrymen. People usually need to experience the signs or omens of an imagined future more concretely in their immediate lifeworlds – the creation of rooms for agency in relation to this larger future sphere of Being, however limited and temporary – in order for this imagined future to become significant in their lives. I experienced people expressing gratitude to and hope

in the president and his government at times when they found signs that they might make it in society. To those who looked in vain for such signs in their everyday life, ideologies appeared empty, and the success stories that filled the news broadcasts were triggers of shame and anger. It was thus not always the visions of official narratives that people pinned their hopes on; it was not there that they found signs of futures worth waiting for and committing themselves to. Many pinned their hopes on the Western world, which was now at least indirectly accessible to most people through, for example, the icon of Coca-Cola. I experienced a couple of persons recollecting the very first time they tasted their first Coca-Cola as if this marked an important turning point in their lives. The West was also manifest in the form of Western tourists who offered locals an opportunity to earn a few dollars. A few aired the hope that in the future Islam might gain a greater role in society, governing every part of life, when people would again gain more knowledge. I never heard anyone unambiguously praising Islamic opposition movements such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or Hizb ut-Tahrir, pinning their hopes on their visions for the future. I did occasionally hear people endorse aspects of what was they perceived as 'Wahhabi' teaching, commenting on specific matters and specific concerns. One of my acquaintances, a woman who was alone with her children and working very hard to provide for them, buying nuts in Samarkand and selling them in Bukhara, once – commenting on her difficult situation – told me that she approved of the way the 'Wahhabis' did not allow women to go out alone, and that she would prefer to sit at home in a *paranja*,[10] being provided for by her husband, like Afghan women. Commenting on the phenomenon of prostitution, another woman once told me that Uzbek society would improve considerably if the penal code of the Wahhabis was introduced: then prostitutes would be stoned and thieves would have their hands cut off.

Often hope was pinned on divine justice. There seemed to be a widespread notion of some kind of moral equilibrium in life which would sooner or later bring reciprocal blessings back to do-gooders and let evil acts backfire on evil-doers. When blessing or justice seemed far from what they experienced in their daily lives, shaking their faith in present-time humanity, they most often resorted to a larger time perspective, pinning their hopes on the belief that reciprocal blessing or punishment would be granted on the Day of Judgment. Like Feruza, they would transfer human practice to another game: the ultimate game, set up by God, where the stakes are one's fate in the afterlife. Many *domlo*s in particular tried to persuade other people to think in this way. They pointed to the *avliyo* as examples or ideals that reminded them to view their whole life and all their actions in the perspective of death and the afterlife. If people did not always experience concrete signs of this ultimate future in their everyday life, at least they did not continually encounter evidence that flew in the face of it and that betrayed or ignored its promises, as they did in the case of government narratives.

When people experienced some kind of success in their everyday lives, they frequently interpreted this as reciprocal blessing granted in this life; as a sign or omen of the future – of life's happy ending.

Joking

Joking is an inherently ambiguous discourse which can contain several contradictory truths at the same time. In the most general structural sense, humour can be defined as incongruous and yet meaningful 'bisociations' or combinations into a single frame of reference of elements in a society's way of ordering or classifying its social and symbolic universe (Koestler 1964). Humour is possible whenever a person experiences or is able to interpret a phenomenon in accordance with the principle of incongruity and at the same time recognize it as familiar and feel at a safe distance from it (Jackson 2002: 181). Joking thrives on ambiguities, and joking was also a way for the people I worked among in Uzbekistan to express and manage the contradictions they struggled with in everyday life. In the light of the previous reflections on how people often conceptualized such contradictions in terms of the corrosion of time, it might also be fruitful to approach humour as a certain way of experiencing time. This way of experiencing time is neither a prereflexive immersion in the forthcoming of the world nor a narrative placement of present-day contradictory experiences in a larger time perspective that makes sense of them as but passing moments in a greater story. Rather, humour is anti-narrative: it reveals that such narratives are not straightforward representations of history, but in fact narratives which could have been told in a different way. If the (experiential) present can be defined as 'the set of those things to which one is present, in other words, in which one is interested (as opposed to indifferent, or absent)' (Bourdieu 2000: 210), the humorous attitude can be described as one that acknowledges that present existence is contradictory, but which relates to this contradictory present in a disinterested way, if only momentarily, experiencing it less intensely.

When Tohir's family joked about holding Tohir's *to'y*, marriage feast, in the cotton-picking season (cf. Chapter 5), they momentarily transformed tragedy – the fact that they were stuck in a contradiction between the *mahalla*'s expectations of a big, conspicuous *to'y* and the fact that they could not afford it – to something comical; by acknowledging the contradiction, but holding it at an arms distance, they experienced it less intensely than they usually did. And when Feruza ironically remarked that Tohir should have been her daughter; then they could just have married him off, she also here hinted at what her family usually felt as a suffocating social imperative – that men, in order to be men, should be able to provide for their family's material and financial needs – at a time when rising unemployment rates made it difficult for men to do so, but momentarily felt this social imperative less intensely.

It has frequently been remarked that humour – the appreciation of which often depends on implicit knowledge – can be a form of symbolic and tacit resistance or expression of dissent and solidarity among repressed groups in contexts where outspoken resistance or the expression of dissent is risky or even impossible, for example in authoritarian societies. As described before, I met Muslims who told me how they used to joke with each other about how they suddenly displayed an interest in architecture or showed up as tourists in their own city

when the practice of *ziyorat* had to be couched in terms acceptable to the authorities. Now, in post-Soviet times, these jokes had become signs of shared experience and complicity. During my fieldwork, I only very rarely experienced people joking about the contradictions surrounding the practice of Islam in post-Soviet society; about the fact that religious piety is highly valued but equally open to interpretation as a potential sign of anti-state sentiments and activity. This was something people occasionally joked about, but never in larger social contexts, only in limited communities[11] where they could be relatively sure that a common frame of reference existed. For example, one afternoon Nargiza, my field assistant and the daughter in my host family, met me in the doorway when I was returning to their apartment. 'Watch out, Maria, my mother has become a terrorist!' she said and pointed towards the kitchen. Out there I found Hamida, her mother, sitting by the kitchen table. She was dying her hair with henna and had draped several towels around her head. With another towel she continuously wiped off the dye, which kept running down her face. Nargiza found her hilarious and could not stop laughing and referring to her as 'Wahhabi' and 'terrorist'. Hamida looked daggers at her daughter until a smile of surrender also found its way to her face.

Anyone who knew Hamida – and knew the discourses about terrorism or Wahhabism in Uzbekistan – would potentially find Nargiza's teasing funny; her narrative 'bisociation' of two usually incongruent realms of meaning: Hamida, a woman who would not hurt a fly, and terrorists or Wahhabis who represented radical otherness and radical evilness. Nargiza's joking could be interpreted as mere joking, meaningless absurdity, disclosing nothing, a laugh for its own sake. Or it could be interpreted as simple mockery, confirming the idea that there was a certain way of dressing that was a clear sign of terrorist sympathies. Or it could be interpreted as disclosing a serious truth: that such 'bisociations' were indeed created everywhere in Uzbek society with no intention of joking. This was how I understood Nargiza's joking, given my knowledge of her: as a parody of a paranoid optics that indeed found signs of radical otherness in the most diverse phenomena. It was a way of momentarily granting oneself release from an all too overwhelming reality. I could not be sure, though. Humour only hints at serious truths, and only discloses serious truths to those who know them beforehand.

To sum up, people in Bukhara often located the 'Muslimness' that they found missing in present-day society elsewhere in time, and so their dwelling at sacred places was often the occasion for narratives in terms of which they located, and made sense of, present lifeworlds in larger spans of time. I often found them making sense of the present or, rather, the gap between an imagined ideal 'Muslimness' and present social reality along narrative lines whose images of past and future could change from one moment to the next, dependent on present concerns. But not only did they make sense of their present lifeworlds along narrative lines replete with tropes of time; they also sought to influence the present. Just as there are perlocutionary motives behind the official narratives of the political elites, people in everyday life use tropes of time to negotiate how

the present should be, which realities are worth engaging in, and how the overall make-up of society ought to be.

The use of tropes of time in official as well as everyday discourses as a means to negotiate the present may be characterized as what Michael Herzfeld (1997) has termed a shared 'cultural engagement' with a common ground that may be co-opted and used for various ends, which may be at odds with each other. The question about which concrete phenomena are primordial, old-fashioned, modern, ancient, anachronistic or forgotten is a matter of continuous negotiation in shifting intersubjective encounters. Through the use of tropes of time people negotiate the contours and contents of Uzbek 'Muslimness'.

8 Doing business with Bibi Seshanba

As mentioned in Chapter 4, life in post-Soviet Uzbekistan is characterized by existential insecurity, but also by hope and fascination with the new opportunities independence has brought about for those who understand how to navigate in the post-Soviet chaos. It has confronted people with a range of new existential and moral dilemmas. In this chapter, I examine what may be the most morally ambiguous field in post-Soviet Uzbekistan: the field of business – or *biznes*, according to local terminology. More particularly, I focus on women's efforts to negotiate a foothold in this morally ambiguous sphere through their engagement in the *Osh Bibiyo* ritual.

The field of business

In the Uzbek context the term *biznes* can refer to anything from large-scale commerce to the humblest petty trade in the bazaars, and sometimes to almost any way of making money, especially in private – and sometimes shady – sectors of the economy. English speakers, for example, can make a business of offering various services to tourists, teachers can make a business of selling good exams to students, state officials can make a business of providing services for people on time, police officers can make business of fining people for imaginary offences. I even sometimes heard begging referred to as a kind of business which can be profitable.[1] Anecdotes are told about people who make a business of walking blind people across the street, or answering questions about what time it is. However jokingly told, these anecdotes testify to what many experienced as the discomforting invasion of all spheres of society by money and a money-making business mentality. They point to an experience of the quest for money and material things as playing a disproportionate role in people's lives in a society where bribery is the rule rather than an exception if people want to get a job, pass an exam, or achieve proper treatment in hospitals, and where money opens every door, enabling the laziest and least talented student to take a degree with distinction at any of the country's institutions of higher learning.

The sphere of business is the object of great fascination, as it offers a seemingly unlimited array of opportunities to improve life, a source of appropriation of goods one could not even begin to imagine during Soviet times, and an arena

for the display of the highly valued virtues of industriousness and entrepreneurship. At the same time, the emerging and rather diverse sphere of business is also looked upon with considerable suspicion, being considered potentially subversive and threatening in relation to the social and moral order. Part of the reason for this undoubtedly has to be found in the fact that 'speculation', that is, the making of profit through buying and selling goods without adding any value by means of one's own labour, became a crime in Soviet times (cf. Humphrey 2002: 59). Large parts of the population still share the Marxist view that true value is created by labour only and that trading activities per definition are morally suspect. The suspicion surrounding the sphere of business, however, also stems from the experiential realities of post-Soviet life: the association of the concept of business with shady affairs like those described above and the fact that most people have felt morally offended by encounters with fellow citizens who have made a business of providing services that ought to be provided free of charge. Business can be liberating, and it can be entrapping: many people are fascinated by the freedom granted the successful businessman or woman to buy whatever he or she wants and thus to express his or her individuality through consumption (cf. Kuehnast 1998). Stories, however, also circulate about weak-minded people who have initially had some success in business, who have 'smelled' money and have therefore – like pathological gamblers – been unable to stop while the going was good and instead mindlessly continued along the same track until debt led them and their families into ruin or criminality. And then, of course, there are the new rich, those who have made it in the post-Soviet market economy. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in post-Soviet Uzbekistan most people have experienced severe economic hardship after independence. In this context, the conspicuous consumption of the new rich offends the eye and make most people doubt how they could have made it so far and so fast without using dirty, amoral and criminal methods – or by divine intervention. Among people I knew in Uzbekistan there was intense discussion and speculation about whether success in business – with its ambiguous connotations – should be regarded as a result of divine blessing or, on the contrary, as a result of amoral acts that will have repercussions in the afterlife.

If the sphere of business is considered generally suspect, it is even more so for women. Although – or maybe rather because – increasing numbers of women have responded to Uzbekistan's economic crisis by taking up informal work such as petty trade in the bazaars, a large part of the population shares the attitude that it is shameful for a family if the women have to work outside the home, and especially in the morally dubious sphere of business.

Here I will focus on women's efforts to negotiate a foothold in this ambiguous sphere through their engagement with sacred space. More specifically, I focus on the engagement of two businesswomen in the *Osh Bibiyo*,[2] a women's ritual held in honour of the female *avliyo* Bibi Seshanba ('Lady Tuesday'). At first sight the ritual may appear as a constituent of an illusio encouraging women to imitate a passive and subversive kind of agency and associating female identity exclusively with the home and family life. On the contrary, I argue that the

ritual is much more flexible; in fact, it constitutes an important context for women's negotiation of which parts of reality they should constitute their agency and femininity in relation to.

Osh Bibiyo

Bibi Seshanba, in honour of whom the *Osh Bibiyo* is held, is regarded as a protector of home and family life, and of women in particular. She is considered the aunt of Bahouddin Naqshband and the sister of another female saint,[3] Bibi Mushkul Kushod ('Lady Problem-solver'), in whose honour another related ritual is held.[4]

Similar to the practice of *ziyorat*, the *Osh Bibiyo* ritual throve during Soviet times and seems to have been relatively unaffected by any anti-religious measures. This has probably much to do with the fact that it takes place in the less controllable domestic sphere: ritual space is created, and the presence of Bibi Seshanba invoked, at home. The *Osh Bibiyo*, furthermore, is exclusively the domain of women. While Soviet authorities clearly recognized the influence Central Asian women had in the family and in keeping alive religious traditions, they did not see them as opposed to Soviet rule, but rather as oppressed, dissatisfied or just ignorant victims of Islamic traditionalism who would gladly throw off the yoke of Islam when properly educated and socialized. In other words, they were seen as objects of reform, not as active subjects.[5] Therefore the programmes and policies directed at women were subtler and did not usually involve extreme measures (Michaels 1998; Northrop 2004; Tyson 1997). *Oymullo*s however had to tread cautiously. An *oymullo* told me that she had once been asked to be in charge of an *Osh Bibiyo*. She refused because her husband was a member of the Party and would be kicked out if the Party heard about this. Instead, she left for Tashkent. But on her way to Tashkent she suddenly discovered that her tongue was paralysed, and that she was unable to say anything. This, she said, was a warning from Allah that she had to pray for those who asked her to and not fear the authorities. And so she took the next train back to Bukhara in order to lead the *Osh Bibiyo* she had been asked to lead. There, in the train, she immediately regained her ability to speak.

The *Osh Bibiyo* remains very significant today (cf. also Krämer 2002). Although deemed un-Islamic and superstitious by some (cf. also Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004: 340–1) several men and women mentioned the hosting of and attendance at *Osh Bibiyo* as one of the basic requirements for women to be proper Muslims – unlike the five 'pillars' of Islam, which are considered by many to be less important. Cheap printed copies of the manuscript on which the performance of the ritual is based are on offer at shrines and in the bazaars. Handwritten versions and pre-Soviet lithographic versions also continue to circulate, especially among *oymullo*s.

Preparations and order of events

Osh Bibiyo is held on a Tuesday, starting at noon, in private homes. Sometimes the *Osh Bibiyo* takes place among a small circle of relatives and close friends; sometimes it is much bigger, involving the participation of a whole neighbourhood. The hostess of the *Osh Bibiyo* is a woman who has a wish or a problem, or who has been granted a wish after another *Osh Bibiyo* or on another occasion, and therefore wants to express her gratitude. The hostess should ask for flour at 'seven houses' or, alternatively, place some flour in the four corners of her house. This flour is to be used as the base for preparing a special ritual meal, *o'moch*: a kind of stew made from flour, rice, milk, lentils, chickpeas and dried apricots. Then the hostess should invite seven widows, or alternatively poor or orphaned women. This rule is not always followed. According to some, only married women are allowed to participate, while others consider the ceremony open to all women. One rule is apparently never compromised with, or taken up to discussion: men are strictly excluded from the ceremony. According to some *oymullo*s, men are not even allowed to see the flour from which the *o'moch* is prepared. According to Anette Krämer (2002), pregnant women are not allowed to participate either, as they might be carrying a male being. Many men are inclined to regard the *Osh Bibiyo* rather ambiguously. Among men it is a favourite subject of jokes which hint that women only attend the ceremony in order to eat and gossip. Most of them, however, acknowledge that it is something women have to do, and accept that their wives spend significant sums of money on arranging it themselves and once in a while half a day attending *Osh Bibiyo*s arranged by other women.

One of the *Osh Bibiyo*s that I had the opportunity to participate in during my fieldwork was held by Gulnora, one of my field assistant Baxtiyor's aunts. Gulnora did not want a big *Osh Bibiyo*. She pointed out to me that originally it was a strictly religious ceremony. The fact that today some people had virtually made the *Osh Bibiyo* a *to'y*, a feast, where they could show off their wealth, only testified to the superficiality of people nowadays. She merely wanted to invite her close relatives – and the anthropologist who hung around with her nephew.

I arrived at Gulnora's *Osh Bibiyo* on a Tuesday in October 1998 together with Gulnora's sister, who had taken half a day off from her work at the university to attend it. On our arrival she put on a traditional silk dress, jewellery and make-up. Although Gulnora considered this a strictly religious ceremony, her sister, like most of the other visitors, wanted to look good.

We were seated on the floor around a big *dasturxon*.[6] The oldest and most honoured guests were seated close to the 80-year-old *oymullo* who had been invited to lead the ceremony. Those of us who had not already covered our hair with a scarf were handed one. The ceremony started when Gulnora came into the room carrying a folded *dasturxon* above her head, walking slowly and bowing three times on her way. The *dasturxon* was then unfolded in front of the *oymullo*, and on it were placed two burning candles, a bowl with sweetened milk and a bowl with sweetened water, a plate with wild rye, a plate with some of the

flour from which the *o'moch* had been prepared, covered with a handkerchief, and two bowls filled with *o'moch.* Then the *oymullo* started the prayers. She read a long passage from the Qur'an and a *duo*, after which *o'moch* was served and eaten along with abundant quantities of various bread, pastries, fruits, salads and sweets which some of the guests had helped Gulnora to prepare. At some point the *oymullo* alternately blew at the sweetened water and milk and read from the Qur'an, and then passed the bowls round for everyone to sip from. She also read aloud from her manuscript, alternating between prayers in the name of various *avliyo* and the story about Bibi Seshanba that explains the reason for the necessity of the performance of the *Osh Bibiyo*. The Bibi Seshanba story follows here.[7]

> Once upon a time, there was an orphan girl. She was treated very badly by her stepmother. Every day she was sent to the steppe with a cow to herd and a huge load of cotton to spin. The amount of cotton was so enormous that she was often unable to spin it all, and so her stepmother punished her. One day the cow broke loose. The girl followed it, and she was led to a cave in the mountains. In the cave she found an old woman who was praying. That was Bibi Seshanba. The girl told her about her stepmother. Bibi Seshanba, however, told her not to worry. She only needed to feed the cow with the cotton, then it would make yarn that she could draw out from its behind. And so she did. When she came back, the stepmother could not understand how she had been able to make so much yarn in such a short time. She became angry and had the cow slaughtered. Bibi Seshanba, however, told the girl to calm down and wait for some time: one day, she would become very rich.
>
> Time passed, and one day an important man held a big party and invited the whole city. The girl, however, had to stay at home and sort some grains and peas. A hen came up and helped her, and therefore she was able to finish the work very fast. Having finished she went to see Bibi Seshanba. Bibi Seshanba saw that the girl wanted to go to the party and said that she should go. The girl answered that she had nothing to wear. Bibi Seshanba then prayed for her, and suddenly angels appeared and dressed her up in a beautiful dress and in golden shoes. Then she went to the wedding. There, everybody thought she was a princess, and they asked her to sit in front of the guests. She saw her stepmother sitting by the door, and she sent some of her food to her, because there were many wonderful dishes where she was sitting. On her way home she lost one of her shoes on the staircase. The man who held the party looked everywhere, but it was impossible to find anyone who fit the shoe. When he came to the girl's house, the stepmother hid her in the oven and hoped that the shoe would fit her own daughter. The shoe, however, was too small for her. The man was just about to leave, but then the hen disclosed the girl's hiding place. The girl tried on the shoe, and it fit her. She was very beautiful. Then the man said that he wanted to marry her. And a big wedding was held.

> After the wedding she went to Bibi Seshanba and brought her a lot of things to express her gratitude. Bibi Seshanba said that she did not need anything, but if the girl wanted to thank her, she should prepare a special dish every Tuesday and tell about her miracles.
>
> The girl, then, started preparing for her first *Osh Bibiyo*. When her husband saw the *o'moch*, however, he became very angry, because *o'moch* was a dish for poor people. 'Why are you eating that?' he asked her and threw it out. Soon after he got a guilty conscience, and he decided to bring his wife three beautiful watermelons. On his way back from the fields people told him that three princes had disappeared. Suddenly somebody saw that blood was running from the man's bag. And when they looked, they did not find any watermelons, but the heads of the three princes.
>
> Before his execution, the man requested that he once again be brought to his house in order to ask his wife for forgiveness. When he came there, he cried and asked her what kind of meal it was that it should bring him into such misfortune. When his wife told him about Bibi Seshanba, he repented deeply. He asked her to prepare *o'moch* again. And in the meanwhile, the heads of the princes had changed into watermelons again, and people saw that the man was innocent. After this, the girl arranged *Osh Bibiyo* every Tuesday.[8]

After a couple of hours of praying, storytelling and eating, the plate with wild rye was set on fire and a woman carried it around in the room, spreading the smoke and making sure that everybody there got the chance to inhale it. The women in turn went up to the *oymullo* to ask her to pray for them; they gave her some money and got her to perform a prayer suiting their wishes and hopes – and each time all the women joined in the *duo*. Gulnora's *Osh Bibiyo* was characterized by a rather light mood among the participants: either they did not have any particular problems, or they did not want to share them with the women present.

Finally, the *dasturxon* was folded again and carried out of the room, this time by Gulnora's sister, because she intended to hold the next *Osh Bibiyo* in the family.[9] She wanted to express her gratitude for the fact that most of the wishes she had had for her family had been fulfilled: two of her sons had been admitted to university, and her husband had become professor. She lifted it above her head and carried it out of the room, walking backwards and bowing three times. All the other ritual things were also carried out; what had been ritual space was now desacralized, and most of the women removed their scarves. We saw that Bibi Seshanba had left traces in the flour; that she had been present, and that the performance had been a success. Then *osh* (pilaf) was served.[10]

A slightly different *Osh Bibiyo* which I shall also use as a point of departure here was hosted by a woman unknown to me, but was led by an *oymullo* of my acquaintance. It was quite large: as my field assistant Nargiza and I arrived at the big house on the outskirts of Bukhara where it was to take place, close to 80 women from the whole *mahalla* had already filled up several rooms. Some of

the participants seemed to take the ceremony quite lightly, chatting, laughing and eating during the prayers, and thus in a sense confirming Gulnora's remark that for some people the *Osh Bibiyo* had degenerated into a kind of *to'y*, as well as the men's rumour that women only participate in order to eat and gossip. However, during the part of the ceremony where each of the women asked the *oymullo* for a particular prayer, the atmosphere changed markedly to become very solemn and intense: some women burst into tears; others were just very concentrated on their prayers. The fact that Bibi Seshanba is considered patron of the home and family life was reflected in the wishes that were brought forward in the course of the ceremony: wishes to be blessed with a child, about one's children succeeding at school, about getting money for a new home and for peace and good health in the family. In the ritual space of the *Osh Bibiyo*, it seemed, these women felt relatively free to air problems and feelings that haunted them, to share experiences that were private and often shameful: a burden of childlessness, a husband who drank or was violent, or a child who had problems at school. As they attentively listened to each other's prayers and rounded them off in a shared *omin*, private and often shameful experiences were transformed into public meanings; they were granted recognition by a community, however limited. A balance or integration between one's personal world and the wider world of others – some sort of 'communitas' experience of an immediate and egalitarian human sociality (cf. Turner and Turner 1978) – was created.

Ritual repetition and ritual change

A feature of the *Osh Bibiyo*, as of rituals in general, is formal repetition (cf. Bryan 2000: 19–20; Connerton 1989: 44; Kertzer 1988: 9). The *Osh Bibiyo* represents the rite as it was performed the very first time, as described in the myth about the girl and Bibi Seshanba which is at the centre of the ritual. The successful outcome of the ritual is perceived to be dependent on its correct performance – as is also indicated in the myth by the disastrous outcome of the husband's untimely interference. Through the correct performance of the ritual the miracles of Bibi Seshanba are created anew, the story takes place anew, Bibi Seshanba's presence is invoked, and just as she helped the girl/woman of the myth, she will help the women gathered in her name, provided that they, again like the girl/woman of the myth, attend the *Osh Bibiyo* with faith and pure hearts.

'See, it is just like Cinderella', Nargiza whispered to me, when the *oymullo* had finished her recounting of the Bibi Seshanba myth at the big *Osh Bibiyo* we attended together. The Bibi Seshanba myth can readily be included in what has been identified as a complex of Cinderella-type folktales found all over the world (Baum 2000; Rooth 1951). Feminist scholars have noted the gender stereotypes articulated in this complex of Cinderella stories, pointing out that the heroine of the story – the bearer of the ideal feminine character – is depicted as helpless, passive, silently suffering and submissive. She does not take matters in her own hand, but is entirely dependent on the agency of outside forces –

magical forces and the actions of a man drawn by her beauty – to save her from misery and injustice and to help her become someone; that is, a married woman. The Cinderella figure has even lent its name to a 'Cinderella Complex' (Dowling 1981): a condition or unconscious tendency among women to make themselves emotionally dependent upon and submissive to men. A secret hope, even among the most liberated women, that The Prince, glass slipper in hand, will rescue them from independence and responsibility.

Was it the case that the *Osh Bibiyo* ritual – which had remained formally relatively unchanged during the Soviet period – also remained a constituent of a certain illusio encouraging women to imitate a passive and submissive kind of agency? Was it the case that this ritual, dedicated to the patron saint of the home and family life and the exclusive sphere of women, was instrumental in associating women with the domestic? Did it work to help define women's self-esteem as inextricably bound up with the social status of wife and mother and the art of securing a stable home base for a happy family life in spite of Soviet campaigns for female emancipation, for gender equality before the law, in the home, in education and at work? I was initially tempted to interpret the *Osh Bibiyo* in this way, also considering the ways ritual symbolism was explained to me by ritual experts, the *oymullo*s. They all had slightly different interpretations, but the themes of fertility and a happy family life recurred in these interpretations.[11]

On second thoughts, however, this interpretation is revealed as a gross oversimplification. As has been pointed out by anthropologists working with rituals in other contexts, the myths which are often at the centre of rituals depend on a certain openness to different interpretations to remain relevant and convincing over time. Myths are what Bruce Kapferer has described as instruments through which dimensions of human actualities are enframed and grasped, rather than structures of meaning themselves. They are not representations of lived realities, but rather thematic schemes which can gather an immense diversity of concrete experience into the organization of their events (Kapferer 1997: 62). The openness of myths is crucial to their resilience and capacity to maintain a continuing relevance to diverse contexts of experience constituted in historically distinct social and political circumstances. Primordial themes 'discover the full sense of their primordiality in the diversity of experience' (ibid.).

Similarly, ritual symbols should not be understood as *the* keys to the understanding of rituals. The meaning of a ritual lies only partly in the symbols that form part of it. Symbols are usually open to different interpretations, and thus a ritual will mean different things to different people. Ritual symbols are to be regarded as a framework for reality construction rather than as confirmations of an already existing reality. What makes a ritual performance convincing and moving lies not in the symbols themselves, but in the way they appear in the interaction, in the course of the performance (cf. Bryan 2000: 19; Kertzer 1988: 11; Sjørslev 1992: 10–13).

I will now attempt to show how the ritual as performed on these two occasions became moving to two participants, Nargiza and Gulnora; in other words, I

will attempt to draw out how it 'talked' to idiosyncratic experiences while at the same time grounding its authority in an apparent formal continuity with the past.

Imagining arenas for female agency

At the large *Osh Bibiyo* I participated in together with Nargiza, at some point during the *duo* the women sitting around me signalled that it was my turn to ask the *oymullo* to say a prayer. I became somewhat perplexed and asked Nargiza what to say. Nargiza, who was herself on shaky ground, as this was the very first *Osh Bibiyo* she had attended,[12] cautiously took the matter in her own hands and told the *oymullo* to say a prayer for my work to turn out well. The *oymullo* then in the name of Bibi Seshanba asked God that Mariaxon would write a good dissertation – and that she would find a nice husband and be blessed with children. Neither Nargiza nor I had articulated these last two wishes, but the *oymullo* found it obvious that I – a 28-year-old unmarried woman – would have them. Apparently, it was also obvious to the other women, who nodded and gave me a smile while they joined the *omin*, the confirmation of the prayer. There were limits to how the passage from privacy and publicity taking place during the ritual could be effected. The *Osh Bibiyo* 'communitas' was governed by a politics of storytelling (cf. Jackson 2002) which defined which stories were to be granted recognition, which stories were to be censored and which stories indeed *had to* be told.

I discussed the episode with Nargiza on our way home. 'These women are very old-fashioned', she said in an indignant tone. 'They believe that girls should marry and have children at 16 or 17.' 'I will never marry', she continued, with determination in her voice. Nargiza often expressed pity for her girlfriends from school, most of whom had married and now led their lives at the mercy of their mother-in-law, occupying the lowest rung in their new families and spending all their time cooking, cleaning, sewing, looking after children and feeling burdened with expectations that they would bear lots of children. As mentioned in Chapter 4, since the late Gorbachev period there has been a call for a return to 'traditional' gender roles among parts of the Uzbek elite, a call which has been met with sympathy among large parts of the general population. Nargiza for one had not met it with any sympathy. She told me that she would die if she were forced to live like her married girlfriends. She hated working at home. Talk about Cinderella: when her mother made her stay home to clean, wash or cook in the weekend, she would dress up in an old dress, take on an ironic air of a patiently suffering heroine and refer to herself as *Zolushka*, the Russian Cinderella, whom a prince one day would come and rescue from her misery. Her imaginary prince, however, was not of the kind who would free her from all responsibility outside the domestic sphere, but a 'modern' one, as she termed it; a smart one that she could talk with and who would allow her to pursue her career. She, however, was not too optimistic – '90 per cent of all Uzbek men want their wife to stay at home', she said – and had resigned herself to the thought that marriage was probably incompatible with the future picture she

preferred to draw of herself as a busy and successful modern businesswoman rushing from airport to airport with a cell phone in her hand. This picture was not altogether unrealistic, as in fact she did have a relatively well-paid job with good career opportunities. Her family, and especially her mother, wavered between being proud of her and supportive of her priorities, of a job which also provided the family with their most important source of income and being ashamed because neighbours, friends and colleagues continuously made them feel like they had to justify the anomalous fact that Nargiza had still not married. Once in a while Nargiza's mother reproached her, saying that no one would ever come and propose to her, as she could neither sew nor cook, and any marriage proposal party that might show up would find their apartment too dirty and quickly run away. And so Nargiza was again made to stay home doing housework during the weekend, undergoing a metamorphosis into an ironic *Zolushka*, not sharing the illusio that being good at doing housework was important for being a good woman, not feeling this reality particularly intensely, but engaging in it for pragmatic reasons, in order to help her mother and keep the peace at home.

I asked Nargiza if she considered the *Osh Bibiyo* a stupid ritual. She answered that no, this was a very important ritual, and one that you should attend as a woman. The women there were just old-fashioned, she repeated, 'They believe they know what is best for you.' We talked about that for a while. Nargiza emphasized that she could perfectly well be a modern woman and be a good Muslim at the same time. 'God is in my heart', she said, as she usually did when she tried to convey a sense to me of what it meant for her to be Muslim: a way of being Muslim that she opposed to what she regarded as the outdated morality of some of her contemporaries, which she found reminiscent of her ultimate nightmare: the rule of the 'Wahhabis' or the Taliban, which she believed would make her into a slave.

When Nargiza's mother came back from work, we asked for her opinion about the meaning of the *Osh Bibiyo*. She said that the *Osh Bibiyo* was about creating peace at home. When I asked her what she meant by 'peace' more specifically, she reflected for a short while and then said that it did not have to be at home, it could also be at my office: there could be problems with colleagues, there could be disagreement, gossip and things like that. In this respect the *Osh Bibiyo* could indeed help a 'woman like you', as she said, directed toward me. Nargiza agreed with her mother.

To Nargiza and her mother, the home and family life that Bibi Seshanba was patron of, and within which the heroine of the *Osh Bibiyo* myth unfolded her agency had no fixed and literal meaning. Rather, 'home' was more like a metaphor that *also* could convey the more general meaning of a base, or a field, for female agency to unfold within: an office, for example, and why not the airports and mobile phone conversations Nargiza dreamt about?

The *Osh Bibiyo* can be seen as a context for recreating illusio as it relates to gender identities and roles. It provides women with an outlet for frustrations concerning inadequate means in a field, or game, where female identity and

family life are at stake, and it is instrumental in their attempts to improve their chances in this game. At the same time it is an arena for continuous renegotiation of the rules of the game itself, and thus for continuous attempts to restructure the field according to new distributions of capital. This becomes clearer when one considers Gulnora and her engagement in the ritual more closely.

Doing *biznes* with Bibi Seshanba

A few days after Gulnora's *Osh Bibiyo*, I got the chance to talk with her about her reasons for arranging it. She told me that many years ago when she had had problems getting pregnant, she had promised that if she had a child, she would arrange an *Osh Bibiyo*. She actually did become pregnant and later gave birth to a girl who was now 15 years old. She had been too busy to arrange an *Osh Bibiyo*, but now she wanted to do it; better late than never. And besides, she had recently experienced a *karama* (a miracle worked by a saint). A few years after independence, she had started engaging in business. Gulnora's business was of the classical kind: it consisted of buying furs and selling them in Russia. Last time she was in Russia – that was in August 1998 – she had a strange dream. A figure came to her and said 'the 17th'. When she woke up, she wondered what that meant, and decided to buy a ticket back home to Bukhara for 17 August. When she came back, she found out that a severe economic crisis in Russia had begun on 17 August. And indeed, on 17 August 1998, Russia experienced a major economic collapse, and the rouble was devalued dramatically. If she had stayed – or rather, if she had not changed her roubles in time – she would have been ruined. She was not sure about who the figure in the dream was, but she thought that it was some *avliyo*, and possibly Bibi Seshanba, and she wanted to express her gratitude at the *Osh Bibiyo*.

Considering that Bibi Seshanba is primarily seen as the protector of the home and family life, I found it interesting that Gulnora connected her with the relative success of her business. When I confronted her with my wonder, Gulnora told me that formerly it might have been the case that women only worked at home, taking care of the children and of the house, but nowadays things were different. Now people needed more money, and many women had to work, to do business for example, in order for their families to live a decent life. She and her husband, for example, who were both educated as teachers, had been unable to live on their teachers' salaries, and so Gulnora, like many others, had changed track to the potentially much more profitable, but also highly risky and unpredictable, path of doing *biznes* in the new jungle of the post-Soviet market.

Risk, as Niklas Luhmann (1993) has pointed out, is based on the realization that advantages can be gained only if something is at stake. In the Western market economy, risk is partially controlled by legal mechanisms, and is balanced by trust in abstract institutions as well as in concrete individuals (Lindquist 2000: 318). Risk, however, may seem like an understatement in the context of commerce in Uzbekistan, a context which resembles Russian commerce as described by Galina Lindquist (2000). Lindquist here argues convincingly that the notion of

risk is hardly applicable to the perilous terrains of Russian commerce, where there are virtually no sanctions for breaking contracts nor any legal means to enforce contractual obligations, and where the rules that do exist are formulated vaguely and enforced selectively. Risk is a factor of an (at least partially) controlled environment, whereas the uncertainty underlying the market in Russia, Lindquist argues, is more suitably characterized as 'danger', which she – following Niklas Luhmann – defines as a situation where the environment is beyond control, and where disastrous outcomes cannot be foreseen and avoided. If trade had been like gambling in Soviet times, in post-Soviet times it could, according to Lindquist, better be compared to walking a minefield: market competition tended to be resolved not only through price regulation and quality of goods, but also by hired assassins. In coping with such danger in the face of pervasive distrust, the faculty that allows people to cope and persevere, to engage with the world against all odds, is not 'trust' but rather 'hope'; that is, confidence without any evidence, ungrounded faith in good outcomes (ibid.).

Gulnora was well aware of the dangers lurking in the jungle of the post-Soviet market in Russia and Uzbekistan: not only the tough competition and the opaqueness of economic structures, the development of which often seemed like whims of fate to her, but also the challenges of coping with harassment from customs officers and other officials trying to supplement their own meagre incomes with bribes, with dealers whom she was never sure that she could trust but whom she had to engage with and with mafia-like groups trying to control the trade. Tohir, about whom I have written in Chapter 5, later tried his luck as a businessman, buying up flowers in Uzbekistan and selling them at the bazaar in Novosibirsk. He was, however, beaten up and his flowers destroyed by a group of businessmen from Azerbaijan who were not interested in competition. Such occurrences are normal. 'They are like mad dogs', Gulnora once said about the businessmen she worked among. She, however, did pretty well among these mad dogs – a fact that she largely attributed to the help of God who, she said, provided her with a sense of which people were trustworthy and who were to be avoided, and whose *avliyo* had several times appeared in her dreams, giving her warnings and advice like the one she received about the economic crisis in Russia.

Lindquist points out that it is no coincidence that market and magic are often inextricably intertwined in Russia, and that magicians increasingly offer help in matters of business. Hope is nourished by magic. Taking her point of departure in Pierre Bourdieu's suggestion that magical practices are instrumental before they are signifying, Lindquist argues that magical means are some of the very few means that remain for the less powerful actors in the Russian market to exercise some kind of agency, some (semblance of) power and control over the world in contexts where other modes of action (technological, legal, communal, etc.) are hampered or insufficiently available (Lindquist 2000: 316).

The significance of magic in the Russian market, as described by Lindquist, seems immediately comparable with the significance of transcendental agency in the Uzbek market, and for Uzbek actors in the context of the Russian market.

Avliyo are increasingly sought in matters of business, according to many *domlo*s at least. The engagement with *avliyo* here can be seen as a way of addressing, or living with, risk or danger and fostering hope against all odds.

However, I believe a moral dimension intended to provide agency with moral grounding should be added to this instrumental dimension intended to recreate agency. In a context where the sphere of business had such ambiguous connotations as those described above, Gulnora, like many others, felt obliged to justify her engagement and success morally, to others as well as to herself. She repeatedly emphasized that her goal was not to become rich, but just to make a decent living for her family; to help her daughter to get a good education, for example. She did not want to imitate the tricks of the mad dogs and cheat everybody around her. And if what she did was wrong, why would God help her? Against the view that success in business is a result of amoral acts and therefore a barrier to divine blessing in the afterlife, she put forward another morality which held that success in business may result from the virtues of industriousness and devotion to one's work, qualities perceived to be blessed by God. This morality was for her grounded in local tradition. Gulnora, like many others, made references to Bahouddin Naqshband's saying 'The heart with God, the hand at work', to make an argument that engaging in worldly matters is not contradictory with the message of Islam, with local 'Muslimness', and that honest work may in fact be the best way of serving God. Indeed, she said, the idea that business was inherently evil stemmed from Soviet times. It was an expression of a Soviet mentality, and a symptom of the erosion of knowledge caused by the '70 Soviet years'. In the golden age of Bukhara, when the city was a centre of Islam, it was also a centre of trade, with caravans from the whole world passing through.

Much as for Shoira whom I mentioned in Chapter 4, transcendental agency not only helped Gulnora navigate well enough to avoid being driven out of competition, cheated or robbed by other agents in the post-Soviet game of business. It also helped her not to lose her sanity and her sense of moral judgment, and to preserve a status as a decent human being – to preserve a sense of belonging to a local moral world – despite the fact that her way of making a living was considered morally suspect. One might say that it helped her to convert the profit she had managed to derive from transactions in the morally dubious and potentially anti-social sphere of business into resources instrumental in sustaining the social and moral order (cf. Bloch and Parry 1989).

Like many Uzbek women, including Shoira and Nargiza, Gulnora was trying to attain some balance between a perceived 'traditional' gender ideology defining the ideal role of a woman as wife and mother occupied with domestic obligations, and a perceived 'modern' (or in critics' words 'Soviet', 'Western' or just 'foreign') gender ideology that allows women greater personal independence and freedom of choice outside the home (cf. Akiner 1997b). Added to this, they must deal with an economic situation that makes it necessary for many women to work outside the home in order for a family to maintain what is considered a decent living standard. Gulnora's way of relating her business to Bibi Seshanba – and to a ritual complex that invokes what are conceived of as

traditional female gender ideals – may be seen as a way of countering the risk of losing her valued status and identity as centre of the family and keeper of good morality while engaging in an activity – business – that is generally considered morally suspect, and even more suspect for a woman to engage in. Her relation to Bibi Seshanba was also, perhaps, a way of questioning the whole idea of female identity being bound up with the social status of wife and mother and the art of housekeeping. It may have been easier for Gulnora than for Nargiza to negotiate an alternative sphere for female agency to unfold in this way. Whereas Nargiza was at a stage in her life where everybody expected that her strongest desire was to get married and have children, Gulnora had done her 'duty' in that respect and now was freer to pursue other tracks in life.

At the *Osh Bibiyo*, then, gender roles are thus not only confirmed; they are also renegotiated. The ritual can be considered as a creative form of practice that plays a dynamic role in social change (cf. Comaroff 1994; Dirks 1994). This brings me back to the question of why most men accept that their wives spend significant sums of money on arranging *Osh Bibiyo* and once in a while half a day attending *Osh Bibiyo*s arranged by other women, although they tend to hold the ritual at a joke's distance, at least in the company of other men. I believe that at least part of the answer is to be found in the fact that women, in negotiating gender roles at the *Osh Bibiyo*, are negotiating on behalf of their families. Gulnora's ability to do well among the mad dogs of the market, and her ability to provide her relative success among them with a moral grounding, was no less important for Gulnora's husband than it was for Gulnora. If people accepted that doing business was not incongruent with women's role as centre of the family and keeper of good morality, he would not lose face in letting her do so; it would not be an indication that he could not live up to his role as head of family, as provider of its material and financial needs. At the same time, in order to keep up appearances, he also had to downplay the relative importance of Gulnora's efforts. This may be one reason why he, like other men, related to the ritual through a joking attitude. More generally, I believe that men, in their ambivalent relation to the *Osh Bibiyo*, acknowledge women's central importance in the family, not only in fulfilling traditional roles, but also in financial matters and general decision matters. This, however, is not something they can acknowledge explicitly. It has to remain a public secret. And so men must joke about the ritual.

9 Conclusion

Faraway so close

Among the people of post-Soviet Bukhara, the divine seems to make its presence felt everywhere and yet remain out of reach. It manifests itself in all sorts of glimpses of what their lives could have been like, glimpses of what they are missing in the intersubjective encounters of their lifeworlds.

A balance lost

Taking my point of departure in an insight from Michael Jackson, I have argued that the concern to create a balance between a sense of agency and a sense of belonging to a larger moral order is a fundamental dynamic force in human practice. That this is so becomes particular clear in situations where the balance is radically broken; when people fail to anticipate the forthcoming of the world, experiencing loss of a sense of agency in and alienation from a world that seems beyond their control and understanding.

At the time of my fieldwork many people in post-Soviet Bukhara frequently found themselves in such situations. Rather than seeing their lives improved after independence, they had seen their lives slipping. They would often be moved to tears when talking about their Uzbek homeland, and did indeed talk about independence in terms of homecoming. But they also told stories that made them appear as existential refugees. These stories revealed feelings of estrangement from and distrust towards their immediate surroundings; the unravelling of and unpredictability in social relations; envy and evil eyes hiding behind seemingly friendly faces. These stories disclosed a profound social suffering not so much characterized by material poverty (although many people's lives were indeed characterized by material poverty) as by the fact that people felt deprived of any means of adapting to the changing conditions of their lives and thereby achieving a satisfying social existence. They often praised their government's successful efforts at rehabilitating national moral, and especially Islamic, values unequivocally; but in the next moment, when they described aspects of their own concrete lifeworlds, they complained that the time after independence had been characterized by moral decay, telling stories about people willing to compromise with the most basic moral standards in their struggle for their daily living, being driven farther and farther from the moral

values and ideals of Islam. The Naqshbandis, more particularly, saw and sensed manifestations of uncontrolled *nafs* – human intentionality run wild, agency without moral grounding – everywhere in society. People approved of the value ascribed to entrepreneurship and industriousness in President Karimov's ideology of national independence, and pointed out how this ideology fitted in with the essence of Islam as interpreted by local scholars and saints, but they also often told stories that reflected their own loss of agency in a changing social environment.

Far from always being capable of anticipating the forthcoming of the game, placing themselves where the ball was about to land, these people often experienced being hit in the face by the ball, finding themselves in possession of balls they were not sure what to do with, or being suspended from the game for handling the ball in ways that turned out to be prohibited according to some obscure rules – to stay within the game terminology of Pierre Bourdieu. Like Tohir, who found that all the time he had invested in what he had expected would be his future place of work had suddenly become devalued, and that people he had considered as his patrons suddenly turned their backs at him. Like Shoira, whose efforts at being a good human being, putting her faith in divine justice, backfired on her, as they were probably part of the reason she one day found herself suspected of having relations to those 'Wahhabis' whom she herself feared and despised, conceiving them as incarnations of radical evil. Like Nargiza, who possessed many talents, and who seemed to have much better career opportunities than most people around her, but who often found her surroundings judging these talents and career opportunities irrelevant to the sphere they expected her to constitute her agency within, namely the domestic sphere. Or like Gulnora, who actually seemed to have a sense of the game in the chaotic sphere of commerce, but who felt obliged to justify this sense of the game: if what she did was wrong, why would God help her? The quasi-perfect congruence between habitus and the social world, the immersion in the forthcoming of the world, was rather an ideal and a utopia that they posited against overwhelming experiences of the ground shaking underneath their feet, of expectations continuously transforming into disillusion and of sudden alienation from social communities and moral orders with which they used to identify.

Like so many people in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, these people were made to reflect on their own conditions of existence because these conditions of existence were ripe with contradictions that demanded they be dealt with. Throughout this book I have explored some of the most significant existential paradoxes confronting Bukharans: the contradiction between worn-out promises of a glorious future and ever-declining standards of living; the contradictory fact that religious piety is highly valued but can equally be interpreted as a potential sign of anti-state sentiments and activity; the contradiction between the value granted industriousness in general, and the more specific equation of masculinity with the ability to provide for one's family and serve one's country through industriousness, and the rising unemployment rates and the fact that industriousness and talent are only rarely enough to make it in a society pervaded by corruption; the

contradiction between a perceived 'traditional' gender ideology that defines the ideal role of a woman as that of wife and mother occupied with domestic obligations and an economic situation that makes it necessary for many women to work outside the home. The contradiction between the central value granted the family as society's central pillar and the fact that the family, particularly for women, can be a context for abuse and violence, and the related contradiction between the central value granted the *mahalla* as another pillar of society, a local network of solidarity, and the fact that the *mahalla* is also a context for repressive social control which is experienced as claustrophobic at times. And finally, the contradiction between the opportunities of the expanding free market sphere and the fascination surrounding it and its traps and amoral connotations.

Confronted with contradictions like these, people frequently adopted a reflexive, contemplative stance in relation to their society, seeing it from afar and coming to experience themselves simultaneously and ambiguously as both belonging to and alienated from it. They saw society as both constitutive of what they were and opposed to them; or, rather as split up and composed of actors with good and evil, constructive and destructive, and above all highly inscrutable and unpredictable intentions. No wonder that they were so attentive to the evil eye. The phenomenon of the evil eye captures this sense of the ambiguity of the social very precisely, as it exists as a possibility in all social relations, being sometimes sent by people who are not even aware of their envious, destructive intentions, and thus embodying the experience of a fundamental opaqueness of social relations. As for the Naqshbandis, they also focused their attention on the parallel ambiguous constitutions of their very selves, experiencing their selves not as wholes (which as such would disappear from awareness), but rather as composed of various independent forces endowed with their own agency and at war with each other. They took whatever they might experience of contradictory feelings, impulses and thoughts as signs of this war and strove to support the forces of the Good in order to achieve the ultimate fulfilling existence, being led towards the Creator and manifesting his will in this world.

Transitions: negotiating social memory

People often understood the loss of balance they experienced in terms of the destructive and unpredictable phenomenon of the evil eye or the rule of the *nafs*, human intentionality run wild (and undermining the social and moral order which normally serves as a protection against the destructive effects of the evil eye). And they frequently talked about the balance which they sought to recreate in terms of a 'Muslimness' that time somehow had made them lose or at least partially forget.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a common theme in much writing about Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia is the alleged eradication of knowledge about Islam during the Soviet period. Rather than focusing on the status of people's beliefs and practices relative to Islamic orthodoxy and postulating some kind of quasi-objective social amnesia, I have focused on the experiential realities people were

referring to when they – as they often did – talked about religious amnesia, and how they, indicating or hinting at what was missing and in need of restoration, narratively constituted 'Muslimness' as a social memory, which was at the same time a commentary on the present. Or, more generally, I have concentrated on which experiential realities they were talking about when they located present phenomena within larger spans of time.

Just as the divine grew in people's awareness as they tried to tackle a present in which the divine failed to manifest itself, so did history. Efforts at locating their lifeworld in larger spans of time seemed of great significance for the people I worked among in Uzbekistan at times when they were able to step back from the flow of experience. They frequently located what they were missing in the present in various pasts and futures and talked about present difficulties in terms of the corrosion of time: the anti-social tendencies they found to characterize the social world around them, their loss of a sense of agency, or what they saw as the prevalence of wrong, alien, 'extremist' or 'Wahhabi' understandings of Islam.

Discourses on time and discourses on Islam intermingled both in the official discourses of the post-Soviet Uzbek government and in everyday Islam in Bukhara. This did not mean that everyday Islam in post-Soviet Uzbekistan was overdetermined by official discourses, and that the post-Soviet government had succeeded in its semantic colonization of past and future and thereby in educating people's attention, determining which realities they should engage in. With an exclusive focus on formal discourse one runs the risk of missing the often very different stakes people in practice invest in similar discursive frameworks, the often very different meanings they attach to them. As I increasingly became aware, and as the ethnography presented in this book hopefully shows, Bukhara Muslims talked about a variety of things when they talked in the idiom of the dominant discourse. That is, metaphors of time were prevalent, but they were used to talk about a variety of things and thereby given varieties of meaning. It was a matter of continuous negotiation in shifting intersubjective encounters which concrete phenomena were remnants to be overcome, and which were collective memories to be invoked; which phenomena were primordial, old-fashioned, modern, ancient, anachronistic or forgotten; which phenomena should be regarded as signs of proper 'Muslimness'; and which phenomena should be regarded as signs of amnesia, of the darkness covering the hearts of people. In other words, tropes of time were general formal frameworks through which people expressed and interpreted various experiences, generated various meanings, conceptualized relations between Selves and Others and negotiated how the present should be; which realities were worth engaging in in a changing society, and how the overall make-up of this society ought to be. I have characterized the frequent use of tropes of time by Bukharan Muslims with a term borrowed from Michael Herzfeld: that is, as a shared 'cultural engagement' (Herzfeld 1997) with a common ground that might be co-opted and used for various conflicting and contradictory ends. The use of tropes of time constituted a shared cultural engagement that brought various lived memories, imagined

pasts and hoped-for futures into play, often in what, to the outside observer, seemed like highly ambiguous ways.

Social memory, in my account, appears as a continually negotiated process where chronotropes are created, filled with diverse kinds of historical consciousness, diverse kinds of evoked pasts, and invoked by various actors as they strive to gain a foothold in the present and to influence how this present should be.

As social memory emerges as a morality-in-the-making, it should also be clear that the neo-evolutionary concept of 'transition' – whether as it has been used in many academic studies and journalistic reports or as it has been used in the policy plots of the political establishment in post-Soviet Uzbekistan – hardly captures how people who have been living through the changes taking place since the dissolution of the Soviet Union experience and make sense of these changes along temporal lines. Such transition narratives, central to the discourses on time so recurrent in Uzbekistan, are ideological constructs, whose imagined futures are no more 'real' than those other imagined futures which people also set up as they struggle along, pinning their hopes on various phenomena which they take as some kind of omen of how the future will develop. The actions of the people I met during my fieldwork did not merely point toward finite time horizons of national resurrection – official transition narratives were hardly convincing enough for people to make them real by engaging in them. Their actions, rather, pointed in all sorts of directions, depending on the situation and the intersubjective encounters they were engaged in.

Pursuing 'Muslimness'

Experiencing their lifeworlds as fragmented and insecure, Bukhara Muslims pursued what they were missing, and the knowledge to put it into perspective, at sacred places which they saw as manifestations of the divine in the world which had somehow escaped the corrosion of time. Their pilgrimages took them to the shrines that were visible in the physical landscape and which were found all around the city; to sacred space temporarily created during rituals like the *Osh Bibiyo*; to dream-encounters with saints of past times, or to the innermost corners of their very being. Sacred places were thresholds or doorways to the divine, to what lies beyond ordinary human experience. At the same time they were chronotropes, time lagoons, icons or symbols of golden pasts and hoped-for futures. They were places where everything people were missing in their lifeworlds was somehow gathered, whether concretely or symbolically. They were loci for social memory, and accordingly the practice of *ziyorat* was a commemorative ceremony. Entering sacred space was virtual time travel that took visitors back to places 'elsewhere' in time, where the divine had manifested itself more clearly; where the city had been full of *avliyo*; where God had been reflected in the hearts of people: in short, where life had been characterized by proper 'Muslimness'. Or it was a form of time travel which pointed towards hoped-for futures where the divine blessing which they usually only experienced as a meaningful absence would again permeate their lifeworlds.

The social world as objectified and idealized, the social world as it ought to have been and as it was perceived to be embodied, or at least symbolized, in sacred space, was a social world characterized by proper 'Muslimness'. Just as official narratives put forward the idea of a home-grown Islam inseparable from national values and morality as such, people in Bukhara, in everyday arguments, often insisted that the true way of Islam for them was Islam as it had been interpreted and practised by local scholars and saints, by their national ancestors: that is, it was local 'Muslimness' rather than 'Islam'.[1] They downplayed the importance of practising the five 'pillars' of Islam in comparison with what they saw as the much more essential effort to keep God in the heart while striving to make a living through honest work, an effort Bahouddin Naqshband, Bukhara's patron saint, had enjoined them to with his 'motto' 'The heart with God, the hand at work'; and in comparison with engaging in local ritual practices such as paying *ziyorat* to the shrines of local *avliyo* and arranging and attending ritual occasions such as the *Osh Bibiyo*. They expressed much confidence in the fact that what they practised was a 'little' tradition, that is, a local contextualization of Islam, a certain way of *being* Muslim rather than some orthodox doctrine. Their specific Uzbek 'Muslimness', they thought, was innate, something primordial, an inner essence received through the blood, rather than something they had adopted as a matter of deliberate and conscious choice. It was something that had been repressed and therefore might be partly forgotten, but anyway something that was essentially there as part of their very nature. At the same time, they were also eager to point out that this 'little tradition' was not only particularly suited for Uzbeks, but also brought them to the very essence of the 'great tradition' of Islam. It expressed the true spirit of Islam in a universal sense, contrary to the interpretations of the 'Wahhabis', who despite their universalist claims had adopted a distorted view of Islam which only served their limited and corrupted interests.

Moralities in the making

In their attempts to restore Islam from oblivion, seeking it in places that had somehow escaped the corrosion of time, and to distance themselves from the 'Wahhabis' and their interpretations of Islam, people created new – explicit or implicit – understandings of Islam and of what it means to be Muslim. These new understandings pointed out the inadequacies of the reified concepts of Islam and the dichotomies between essentialized conceptions of 'tradition' and 'religion' on the one hand, and 'modernity' on the other, which have informed many studies of Central Asia's Muslims. That is, Central Asian Islam was neither a 'remnant' of earlier forms of social consciousness, as Soviet studies of it usually claimed, nor was it a quasi-primordial defence against modernization, as it had been depicted by many Western scholars during the Soviet years. Neither was it something forgotten nor something lacking as many post-Soviet studies have claimed. Islam was rather a morality in the making, the contours of which were continually being negotiated. In everyday Islam signs of the divine could be

found in the most various phenomena: in the actions of a former Soviet leader such as Josef Stalin, in a medal for being a Soviet hero mother, in a faded *Mir* wall painting, in the acquisition of a pair of glasses, in the birth of a child, in a successful business transaction, in the firing of a jealous colleague, in the celebration of an *avliyo* or in the restoration of a shrine. Similarly, signs of evil could be found in the most diverse phenomena, as could signs of alien, 'extremist', 'Wahhabi' versions of Islam. Signs of 'Wahhabism' could be found in, for example, the promotion of traditional gender roles, in the beard of a young man or the veil of a woman, in too much talk about God or in the disbelief in the power of the shrines of *avliyo.* In everyday Islam, people often spoke in terms of official discourses and used their distinction between a home-grown and an alien, 'extremist' Islam, but they invested many different concerns in this dichotomy and used it to talk about many different phenomena. Accordingly, people who found themselves accused of 'Wahhabist' anti-state sympathies were often not primarily victims of a central state will to order, but rather of local fears of disorder which depended on a range of local concerns.

I have argued that from an anthropological perspective, it is not so interesting to compare these interpretations of Islam with an Islamic orthodoxy as it is to focus on the ways in which people actually live, experience and use them. The people I came to know were not primarily interested in Islam as a world view, an extracontextual ideational order. Often, to an outside observer, the interpretations of Islam they brought forward – being able to see signs of the divine in Soviet insignia as well as shrines, in Coca-Cola billboards as well as dream-encounters with saints – seemed to reflect a 'mixture' or 'bricolage' of different world views, i.e. what one might identify as aspects of 'Soviet', 'nationalist', 'Western', 'traditional' or 'Wahhabi' world views or ideologies. Furthermore, most people could easily switch between different ontologies of sacred space: between the view that sacred places concretely embodied the divine in its essence, and the view that these places were merely symbols or traces of a divine presence in the world. Conceiving this in terms of 'world view' might lead one to conclude that the 'world views' they held were logically contradictory, reflecting the turbulent and traumatic history of the region and indicating a 'lack of knowledge' about Islam resulting from the 70 years of Soviet rule. But rather than abstracting these interpretations from their social contexts of use in that way, I have chosen to relate their varying interpretations, and the varying phenomena they experienced, as signs of the divine, to the different contexts these experiences and interpretations took place within. Knowledge is related to doing; it resides in practice. Everyday Islam was not abstracted from the concerns of everyday life but, on the contrary, integrated with these concerns; important things were at stake in people's practice and understanding of Islam. People found signs of the divine in everything that provided them with a sense, or merely the hope, of agency in relation to a sphere of Being to which they belonged, and in phenomena they at least could dwell nostalgically on, taking them to a place in the past where they had led a more satisfying social existence, at least in some respects. Different intersubjective encounters, furthermore, led

people to make use of the imaginative potentials of sacred space in different ways.

In the most general sense, what was at stake in people's engagement with sacred space was the possibility of a satisfying social existence with a balance between active and passive modes of being. When the balance was disturbed in the sense that they felt the social to be suffocating, leaving them no room for agency, what they sought in sacred space was power to act on the world or knowledge to imagine it in a different way, to put social imperatives into a different perspective that made them seem less involving. When the balance was disturbed in the sense that they experienced agency and autonomy but found themselves on the margins of the social world they belonged to and identified with, what they sought was a moral foundation of agency and knowledge to imagine subjectivity differently. In other words, they sought a narrative which switched the constitution of their subjectivity from a sphere of Being they felt alienated from to a sphere of Being where it could be integrated: if they could not be heroes in a story about national resurrection, they might be heroes in a narrative of God's grand plans for human life.

The divine, to these people, was faraway but close: it made its presence felt most strongly when it was felt most strongly to be missing; when it did not manifest itself in their lifeworlds; when their usual ways of acting in the world were blocked; and when they felt alienated from worlds they used to feel at home in. Absence somehow magnifies reality. This may also be one of the reasons the illusio of Islam was so rarely questioned among these people; why they were so sure that they were Muslims in spite of the fact that they had been subject to extraordinarily organized and profound efforts at secularization and disenchantment for decades. These people were acutely aware that they and their fellow countrymen had somehow forgotten what it meant to be Muslim – intellectually, morally and practically. They were living with a chronic sense of loss. The art of being Muslim the right way was to a large extent something they defined negatively. They continually redefined it as everything they were missing in their lifeworlds, as everything that prevented them from reaching fulfilment in life. The art of being Muslim the right way sometimes consisted in the moral righteousness they found lacking in the actions of people around them; sometimes it was their grip on the world they felt they had lost; sometimes it was the moral foundation of things they needed to do to get by in life which had amoral connotations to people around them. In other words, precisely because 'Muslimness' was a morality in the making rather than a fixed answer to the predicaments of life, it was able to give meaningful answers to people as they struggled along, trying to cope with a changing social world.

Being in an insecure world

As already described, people's engagement in Islam, their efforts at creating a satisfying social existence, took place against the background of profound social changes that had made the ground shake beneath their feet, making them feel

deprived of the means to adapt to these changing conditions for their lives. Their lives, in many ways, were characterized by social suffering, and in their engagement in Islam they had to tread very carefully in order for their religious piety not to be taken as a sign of 'extremist' anti-state sentiments. Anyway, most of them somehow tried to accommodate to this state of affairs, giving peace the highest priority and usually carefully balancing their own concerns with the interests and sentiments of their local communities, although these communities, at times, might feel entrapping and suffocating.

I have attempted to show that what people in Bukhara sought, in trying to recreate a fulfilling social existence in a situation of crisis and existential insecurity, was neither absolute mastery of the world nor absolute immersion into some larger sphere of Being. In focusing on how people carefully balance various concerns, how they seek to create a space for agency for themselves, but at the same time seek a moral grounding of their agency in a transcendent sphere of Being, I have wished to counteract the fascination the Western media as well as scholarly discourse displays with such conspicuous phenomena of life in post-Soviet Central Asia as the radical Islamists and their utopian visions about the re-establishment of the Caliphate, the flamboyant behaviour of the new rich and the gangster capitalism of the market. Not that I do not find those phenomena interesting and important to understand; but too much focus on them may distort our understanding of what characterizes life for, and what the world looks like to most people there; how they imagine and seek to create a fulfilling social existence; what drives their practice.

Although the situation the people I met in Bukhara found themselves in was characterized by extreme existential insecurity, they did not resort to extreme ways of being in the world. They did not blindly and unreflectively embrace post-Soviet nationalist discourses, Islamic traditionalism, Soviet ideology or Western values. Neither were they ultra-liberalists driven by a one-dimensional self-interest that made them cynically engage in whatever illusions might have served their personal interests at particular moments, unable to look beyond the situation immediately at hand. Blind belief and cynical pragmatic faith were rather the extremes of their constantly shifting, and sometimes ambiguous, engagement in and with various parts of reality with various degrees of intensity and passion, in their efforts at making themselves at home in the world. They themselves conceived of these extremes as pathological deviations which were to be avoided. Instead, they sought some kind of ideal 'normal' existence; a quiet life in a peaceful world.

Because of the scale and rapidity of the social, political and economic changes the post-Socialist parts of the world have undergone, many people there have experienced fundamental dislocation and are living lives that are characterized by radical existential insecurity; they are continually forced to doubt the truth of what they think they know and the efficacy of what they customarily have done. The force and scope of the social upheavals in the post-Socialist parts of the world might have been exceptional. However, all around the world people live with varying degrees of existential insecurity, as their lives are

profoundly affected by obscure forces which they are in no position to understand, predict or control, and as they find themselves deprived of the means of adapting to the changing conditions of their lives. People are experiencing 'globalization' not as something that makes the world smaller, but rather as something that makes it ever more opaque and unpredictable. Although they are thus in no way unique, I will nevertheless argue that the experiential realities of the post-socialist societies – because of the scale and rapidity of the changes they have undergone – may be taken as 'diagnostic' (cf. Moore 1994: 365) of some more general issues. That is, the post-Soviet world provides telling cases that can teach us something more general about how people act in order to create a fulfilling social existence for themselves, what conditions human practice in a changing and insecure world.

My work suggests that when we try to understand and explain human practice, we should pay attention to how people seek to balance various concerns in order to come to terms with contradictions and ambiguities characteristic of the world in which they live, thus creating a social existence that is acceptable to themselves as well as to the social and moral communities with which they identify. It points to the value of paying attention to the immediate lifeworld, to the immediate contexts of social life and the little dramas taking place there, which, although they may seem relatively insignificant at first sight, often carry the traces of larger-scale contradictions and processes, as people try to come to terms with, contest and sometimes transform such larger-scale contradictions and processes at local level. And, last but not least, my work points to the fact that what most people pursue in a world that sometimes seems to have gone wild – where people, by way of the images of the global mediascapes (Appadurai 1990), are capable of imagining virtually unlimited ranges of possible lives while being kept in political and economic circumstances that provide them with very few possibilities to actually improve their situation – are not utopian illusions but, rather, some kind of 'normal' peaceful existence with some space for agency within a larger moral community.

Glossary

Aql	Intellect, intelligence.
Avliyo	Saint, friend of Allah. The term, in Arabic, is the plural form of *wali*. However, I only rarely heard the term *wali* used among Muslims in Uzbekistan. The plural form, however, is commonly used as singular.
Baraka	Blessing, abundance.
Bid'a	Heretical innovation; belief or practice for which there is no precedent in the time of the Prophet Muhammad; not conforming to the Prophet's *sunna*.
Chilla	Prayer retreat.
Domlo	'Teacher'. Used as a general term for shrine guardians and religious authorities serving at shrines.
Duo	Free prayer; appeal, invocation addressed to God.
Fatiha	The first *Sura* (chapter) of the Qur'an. The *Fatiha* is recited at the beginning of every *rak'a* (unit of movements and formulae in the ritual prayer) and is also frequently recited at the beginning of a *duo*.
Fatwa	A legal decision/opinion rendered by a *mufti*.
Glasnost	'Openness'. A concept used by Mikhail Gorbachev to refer to the policy of openness he introduced in the mid-1980s to ensure the success of his policy of *Perestroika*.
Hadith	Written accounts of what the Prophet Muhammad said and did or of the tacit approval of something said or done in his presence. The source material for the *Sunna* of the Prophet, gathered together in the six books of authoritative traditions in Sunni Islam. One of the great *Hadith* collectors, Imam al-Buxoriy (d. 870), was born in Bukhara and is buried close to Samarkand.
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca performed in the month of *Dhu'l-hijja*. One of the five 'pillars' of Islam; a requirement for all Muslims once in a lifetime, if they have the opportunity.
Halal	Permitted according to Islamic law.
Haqiqa	Truth, reality.
Haram	Prohibited according to Islamic law.

Hijab A veil or partition. In Uzbekistan the concept generally refers to a scarf that is fastened in the front with a clasp and is associated with a 'Wahhabi' dress code.

Imam Prayer leader.

Jahriyya Loud, outspoken (about the *zikr*).

Jazba Attraction by God.

Jihad Effort, fight. While the concept is often used in the meaning of 'crusade', 'holy war' against unbelievers, Sufis most often use the concept to refer to the struggle against the *nafs*.

Karama Miracle (worked by a saint).

Khanaqah Sufi centre, residence.

Khutba Sermon given by an *Imam* after the Friday prayer.

Madrasa Islamic educational institution, secondary school.

Mahalla Quarter, neighbourhood.

Ma'rifa Gnosis.

Mi'raj The Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven in which he met with the prophets of the past, was given visions of heaven and hell, gazed upon God and was given the command of five prayers a day for all Muslims.

Mozor Place of burial, graveyard, shrine.

Mufti A person who has authority to issue a *fatwa*.

Murid Disciple, novice.

Muraqaba Contemplation (on the *shaykh*).

Nafs The lower human self or base instincts.

Namoz The prescribed five prayers a day; one of the five 'pillars' of Islam (*salat* in Arabic).

Omin 'Safe', 'secure'. The term is used like the terms 'amen' and '*amin*' among Jews and Christians as confirmation of prayers.

Oymullo Female mullah.

Perestroika 'Restructuring'. A concept used by Mikhail Gorbachev to refer to the policy of restructuring he introduced in the mid-1980s.

Pir Spiritual guide.

Qalb Heart, soul.

Ruh Spirit.

Ro'za Fasting performed in the month of *Ramadan*, one of the five 'pillars' of Islam, required of all Muslims (*saum* in Arabic).

Shari'a The religious law; the rules and regulations governing the lives of Muslims, derived from the four sources of law in Sunni Islam (*Qur'an*, *sunna*, *qiyas* ('analogy') and *ijma'* ('consensus').

Shaykh Spiritual leader, guide.

Shahada 'Profession of faith'. Consists in the two phases: '*La ilah illa Allah*' ('There is no god but God') and '*Muhammad rasul Allah*' ('Muhammad is the messenger of God'). One of the five 'pillars' of Islam, required of all Muslims, indicating conversion to Islam but also a part of the ritual prayer.

Shirk	Idolatry, polytheism.
Silsila	Spiritual chain.
Sufi	An adherent of the mystical way of Islam.
Sufism	The mystical way of Islam.
Sunna	'Custom'; the way the Prophet Muhammad acted which is then imitated by Muslims. The source material for the *sunna* is found in the *hadith*.
Tabib	Traditional healer.
Tariqa	Denotes in Sufism the way, which guides a person from the manifest law, *Shari'a*, to the divine Reality, *Haqiqa*.
Tauba	Repentance.
To'y	Life-cycle feast.
Tug'	A pole marking the tomb of a saint.
Ulama	The learned class, scholars; especially scholars of religious sciences.
Umma	The community of Muslims.
Umra	'Visitation' of the holy places in Mecca; the 'lesser' or 'small' pilgrimage. The *'Umra* can be performed at any time of the year.
Wahhabism	A revivalist-purificatory movement under Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), which sought, among other things, to eliminate Sufism. In the twentieth century Wahhabism became (and continues to be) the official religious policy of Saudi Arabia. In all of the former Soviet Union the term 'Wahhabi' is used as a general term for Muslims who are considered to be threats to the established system.
Wali	Saint, friend of God. See *avliyo*.
Xudoiy	Sacrifice.
Xufiyya	Inner, not spoken out loud (about the *zikr*).
Zikr	Remembrance or recollection of divine names or religious formula.
Ziyorat	Visit or pilgrimage to a shrine.

Notes

Notes on transliteration

1 Source: Thomas T. Pedersen ee.www.ee/transliteration/pdf/Uzbek.pdf (accessed on 8 August 2006).

1 Introduction

1 For a survey of the various Muslim populations of the Soviet Union, see Bennigsen and Wimbush (1986). On the eve of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Union's Muslim population numbered 56 million, that is, 20 per cent of the overall population. Most of the Muslims of the Soviet Union were Sunnis, those of the North Caucasus and Dagestan following the Shaf'I school, those of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, and of European Russia and Siberia, the Hanafi School. About three million Azeris living mainly in Azerbaijan were Shi'a Ja'fari, and there were a few Bahais and even fewer 'Ali-Illahis (Lipovsky 1996: 1; Thrower 1994: 175).

2 Mikhail Bakhtin (1998) used the concept of 'chronotrope' (literally 'time space') to denote the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships; the inseparability of space and time. He, more specifically, discusses literary chronotopes, which fuse spatial and temporal indicators into wholes, but the concept, I believe, is also revealing outside the literary realm.

3 On Soviet religious policies, see John Anderson (1994). For a more specific focus on Central Asia, see Keller (2001) and Ro'I (2000).

4 The scholarly and intellectual activities which took place in the Soviet Union under the title of 'etnografika' can be treated as the approximate equivalent of social and cultural anthropology in the West.

5 On the practice of Islam in Soviet Central Asia, see Akiner 1997a; Critchlow 1991: 21, 167; Olcott 1995: 21, 24; Rashid 2002: 40–1; Roy 2000: 152.

6 Professor of ethnography at Moscow State University, Sergei Poliakov, in his *Everyday Islam. Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia* (1992), the manuscript of which he completed in 1989, made a harsh critique of the view that there were no material roots for 'parallel' Islam – or what he chooses to call 'traditionalism' or 'everyday Islam' – in Central Asia Soviet society; of the view that 'parallel' Islam was only to be considered as a survival of earlier forms of religion. 'Everyday Islam', Poliakov stated, exists because it has a real material base, a 'second economy' existing parallel with the Soviet state sector economy. Local elites – by Poliakov considered highly corrupt – control that part of the surplus from this 'second economy' is channelled into communal events such as weddings and funerals as well as unofficial, 'parallel' mosques, Qur'an schools and shrines.

7 According to Sergei Poliakov's 1989 work (cf. Note 6), 'The number of officially registered religious institutions does not constitute even one percent of the mosques

and mazars that actually operate and that regulate the Muslim's way of life, defining his ideology' (Poliakov 1992: 95).

8 The distinction between 'great tradition' and 'little traditions' in the study of religion was introduced by anthropologists in the late 1940s to account for local variations in the practice of the world religions (Eickelman 1998: 251–2).

9 Muriel Atkin (1995) makes this point with reference to Sufism in Tajikistan, but I believe that it applies as well to the rest of Soviet Central Asia.

10 See for example Babadzanov 2000; Olcott 1995; Polat 2000; Rashid 2002; Steinberger 2003.

11 See for example Hanks 1999; Olcott 1995; Polat 2000; Steinberger 2003; ICG 2001a; ICG 2001b; ICG 2003a.

12 In classical Islam, the notion of the five 'pillars' represents the epitome of the revealed law as enacted through ritual activity. The five ritual actions are the *shahada* (profession of faith), the *salat* – or in Uzbek *namaz* – (ritual prayer), the *zakat* (charity), the *saum* – or in Uzbek *ro'za* – (fast) and the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). They are duties for which each individual Muslim is responsible. Each of these ritual actions has its own history; none of them have their requirements fully expressed in the Qur'an (Rippin 1990: 86–98).

13 That I use the same term as Sergei Poliakov (1992) does, of course, not indicate that I share his perspective on the phenomenon.

14 The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that they were conducted with the help of interview guides, which did not contain precise formulations of questions, but rather sketched out certain themes that I wanted to touch upon during the interview (cf. Bernard 1994: 209).

15 Initially, I had practically no knowledge of any of the three main languages – Uzbek, Tajik and Russian – which are spoken in the Bukhara region. Although Tajik is the main language in the region (cf. Chapter 4) I chose to concentrate on learning Uzbek in order to manage in other parts of the country as well, and in order to be able to follow the state media. I spent the first six weeks of my first period of fieldwork on intensive language studies with a private teacher and continued taking lessons three or four times a week thereafter. I reached a level of language proficiency that enabled me to manage without major problems in daily life, to conduct minor interviews without an interpreter, to read texts in Uzbek, and to transliterate tape-recorded interviews. However, I continued working with local field assistants as interpreters: they were indispensable when the persons I talked with did not feel comfortable speaking Uzbek, and they remained invaluable as 'gate-keepers' and discussion partners.

16 Bourdieu introduced the concept of 'illusio' in his late writings in order to replace the notion of interest (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 115–17. Cf. also Wacquant 1992: 25).

17 Pierre Bourdieu's central analytical concept of 'habitus' theorizes the transformation from passivity – being acted upon – to activity, the power to act upon. The habitus is a system of durable, transposable dispositions or structures, objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted and predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, principles which generate and structure practices and representations, and which causes these practices and representations, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be nevertheless 'sensible' and 'reasonable' (Bourdieu 1990: 53; Bourdieu 1993: 78).

18 In Bourdieu's scheme of things, the habitus is inculcated less by explicit teaching than by practical experience below the level of consciousness. Placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, the dispositions of the habitus cannot be made explicit or touched by deliberate transformation. The dispositions of the habitus, in other words, tend to be durable; early experiences tend to have particular weight. The habitus tends to protect itself from crises and challenges (that could lead to change) by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, 'that is, a relatively

constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products' (Bourdieu 1990: 61).

19 Bourdieu (1993) launched his theory of practice as an attack against, and a transcendence of, 'subjectivism' or 'phenomenology' (notably represented by Alfred Schutz, Jean-Paul Sartre, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and ethnomethodologists like Harold Garfinkel) and 'objectivism' (notably represented by structuralism, an intellectual tradition he had embraced in his early career), repudiating phenomenology for being unscientifically introspective and as excluding the question of the conditions of possibility of the lived experience or familiar universe it describes. It may, therefore, seem contradictory to combine insights from phenomenological anthropology with Bourdieu's theory of practice. There are, however, many convergences between Bourdieu's theory of practice and the phenomenological anthropology of Michael Jackson, who, agreeing with the criticism of the intuitional, essentializing tenor of much of the work of phenomenological philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger, insists that for anthropology it is the social reality of the lifeworld and forms of social consciousness and experience which are of critical interest (Jackson 1996: 18–27). As I read them, the difference between Bourdieu's theory of practice and Jackson's phenomenological anthropology is not a fundamental one. Rather, it may be characterized by a difference in focus: Bourdieu – maybe because of his background in the structuralist tradition – has a tendency to focus at the generative forces of agency outside the immediate, lived reality of the lifeworld, whereas Jackson, with his focus on the lived reality of the lifeworld, has a tendency to give structural forces a marginal role in his accounts, although he does acknowledge their significance.

20 Following local usage I use the term *mullah* to refer to religious authorities in a general sense, i.e. religious authorities who are not necessarily related to the official Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.

2 Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia

1 Four Muslim Spiritual Directorates were established in the Soviet Union: one at Tashkent for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, one at Ufa for European Russia and Siberia, one at Makhach-Qala for the North Caucasus and Daghestan, and one at Baku for the Shi'as of the entire Soviet Union and for the Sunnis of Transcaucasia (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 84).

2 On the official Soviet Muslim establishment, see Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985; Olcott 1995; Ro'I 2000; Saroyan 1997).

3 'Nations' were constitutive parts of the Soviet political system. As Adeed Khalid has put it,

> The Soviet regime indulged in the most ambitious – and successful – project of nation-building in human history, as nations were created (or 'recognized') and equipped with territorial homelands, along with policies of affirmative action promoting native elites to positions of power within the political system.
>
> (Khalid 2003: 579)

4 It is Anderson's thesis that the idea of homogeneous, empty time, measured by clock and calendar – an idea whose emergence was connected with the development of the secular sciences – indeed was what made it possible to imagine the nation, i.e. to imagine the simultaneous activities of one's fellow countrymen and women in spite of the fact that one never meets nor knows the names of more than a handful of them.

5 Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on 11 March 1985. During his leadership of the Soviet Union, a sense of solidarity among parts of the Uzbek elites against Moscow developed. Officials who were once perceived as loyal executors of Moscow policy now emerged as

spokespersons of Uzbek national interests, playing the national card against Moscow. The issue was not independence – they actually regarded Moscow as betraying Sovietism in the interests of Russian or Slavic nationalism – but rather a change in the relationship between centre and periphery (Roy 2000: 128–9). They played on popular dissatisfaction with ethnic/national discrimination, language discrimination, Russo-centric versions of history, economic failures and exploitation, harassment of Muslim conscripts in the Soviet army, and environmental damage caused by the cotton monoculture developed in Central Asia during Soviet rule. Doing this, they took advantage of the relative freedom of expression brought about by Gorbachev's *Glasnost*, that is, a policy of openness intended to ensure the success of another central tenet of his policy, *Perestroika* (restructuring). The opposition movement was rather heterogeneous: there were democrats, concerned above all with establishing parliamentary democracy, there were nationalists, whose main aim was to assert the rights of their titular nationality, and there were Islamists (Critchlow 1991: 57–120; Roy 2000: 130–2).

6 In Uzbekistan, the Arabic concept of *hijab*, meaning 'cloth' or 'barrier' and used in the Qur'an about the cloth that Muslim women should cover themselves with outside their homes generally refers to a scarf that is fastened at the front with a clasp and is associated with 'Wahhabi' dress codes (see later in this chapter).

7 Deobandism is a Sunni Islamic revivalist sect that was established in British India in the nineteenth century. In the 1990s, Pakistan's Deobandi *madrasa*s played a major role in educating the Taliban leadership (Rashid 2002: 44).

8 The strict Wahhabi creed has its roots in the eighteenth-century revivalist-purificatory movement under Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab Abdul Wahab (d. 1787). In the twentieth century the Saudi royal family adopted Wahhabism as state law, and after the oil boom in the 1970s, Saudi Arabia made spreading Wahhabism a major plank of its foreign policy (Rashid 2002: 45). A high priority of Wahhabis is the promotion of 'purist', orthodox Islam, cleansed of what are seen as superstitious and syncretic practices such as veneration of saints.

9 That is, the visitation of the holy places in Mecca; the lesser pilgrimage, which can be performed at any time of the year.

10 The coalition consisted both of members of the IRP and members of secular parties such as the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (Atkin 1995).

11 The most popular secular political opposition party was *Birlik* (Unity), a democratic-nationalist party established in 1988 by Uzbek intellectuals. It was sharply critical of the regime on a variety of issues and strongly anti-Russian. In April 1990, a splinter group *Erk* (Freedom) was formed under the leadership of the poet Salay Madaminov, who is known by his pseudonym Muhammad Solih. *Erk* was more accommodating towards the regime, and Solih was allowed to run in the presidential elections in December 1991, whilst the *Birlik* leader Abdurahim Polat was excluded. But in 1992, Karimov banned both parties and forced their leaders into exile (ICG 2001b; Melvin 2000; Rashid 2002: 84). See the homepage of *Birlik* on www.birlik.net and the homepage of *Erk* on www.uzbekistanerk.org (both accessed on 10 July 2006).

12 An English version of the law can be found on the web page of the Religion and Law Research Consortium: www.religlaw.org/template.php?id=10 (accessed on 10 July 2006).

13 In Uzbekistan Hizb ut-Tahrir has been particularly active in Tashkent and the Ferghana Valley (ICG 2003b: 18). During my fieldwork in Bukhara I never encountered any signs of Hizb ut-Tahrir activity, and I did not meet anyone who had experienced finding Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets in their mailboxes.

14 See the homepage of Hizb ut-Tahrir at www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed on 10 July 2006)

15 According to the International Crisis Group, particularly in the late 1990s, courts

dealt out extremely long sentences – 15–20 years in prison – for members. Since 2001 these terms have fallen somewhat (ICG 2003b: 33).

16 The International Crisis Group also refers to a sample conducted by the Human Rights Organization 'Memorial' among arrested Hizb ut-Tahrir members. Of these, 56 per cent were unemployed. Ages ranked from 15 to 60, but 82 per cent were between 21 and 36. It is also a predominantly male organization: women make up only a very small percentage of its membership. Many of these women have become involved because their husbands or sons have been arrested (ICG 2003b: 19–20).

17 Hizb ut-Tahrir itself claims that more than 8,000 of its members were arrested during this period. The Uzbek security services claim that 4,200 were still in prison in 2002. The Independent Organization for Human Rights in Uzbekistan puts the total of political prisoners at that time at 7,600, of which 7,400 were 'religious' prisoners, and 4,200 were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir (ICG 2003b: 33).

18 See Atkin (1995) for an analysis of how Islam Karimov used the Tajik civil war as a rationale for his own authoritarian rule (1995: 261).

19 Critique has mainly been launched by independent human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and organizations such as the International Crisis Group as well as independent observers and analysts, who have not only regularly documented human rights violations, but also warned that the growing popularity of radical and militant Islam in Uzbekistan is in fact primarily due to the repressiveness of the Uzbek regime: that the harsh measures against unofficial Islamic organizations merely have radicalized them and are therefore counterproductive – more likely to create the very threat they seek to counter. And that the general repression of alternative forms of political opposition and lack of legal channels for expression of discontent has made, notably, Hizb ut-Tahrir able to attract support from people who may not necessarily share its ultimate goal of establishing a Caliphate with the *shari'a* applied to all spheres of life, but who are opposed to the regime for other reasons.

20 Uzbekistan became a centre of the international diplomatic and military effort against terrorism following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Welcoming a strike at the Afghanistan-based Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and seeing the situation as an opportunity to extract economic and political concessions from the West, Uzbekistan decided actively to support the US-led War on Terrorism by offering air bases for the operations inside Afghanistan that began on 7 October 2001.

21 See for example this excerpt from an address to the parliament on 31 August 2000 in which Karimov commented on the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's incursions into the Surkhondaryo and Tashkent regions:

> Since the first days when we gained our state independence, restoring our trampled [national] values, traditions, faith and our culture has been a priority task for us. Unfortunately, certain people have taken advantage of all this, that is, of our attitude towards our sacred religion, in order to meet their dishonest aims and turn our religion into politics. As a result, people belonging to various harmful sects such as Wahhabism and Hezb-e Tahrir . . . have appeared in our country. The growing activity of those people and centres which advocate the restoration of true Islam and the setting up of the eighth-century caliphates, but in fact who are trying to take our country tens and hundreds of years back, has been especially felt in our country over the last few years [. . .] These extremist forces started their activity in the years when the former Soviet Union collapsed. Centres with huge financial resources, their representatives who entered our country under the cover of compatriots and as people belonging to the same religion, advocated their false ideas and slogans, which at first glance looked impressive. They even expressed their readiness to build mosques and *madrasa*s. Using big money, they led astray certain

> weak-willed people, the aftereffects can be felt even in our present day life. They especially increased their activity from 1991 to 1993. At the beginning, we accepted these people as religious, as people rendering us unselfish aid for the sake of God. The majority of our people not only opened wide their door, they also opened their souls to them. Of course, one reason for that was our people's unaffectedness, benevolence and generosity [. . .] The greatest damage these evil forces inflicted on our country was that they tried and are still trying to lead our young people astray. They have been poisoning their brains at various mosques, distorting the true essence of our sacred religion, misinterpreting it. And by leading our children astray they are attempting to set them against their people, country and parents. As a result of such dirty machinations, many young people have been trapped by fundamentalists for big money.
>
> (Source: www.eurasianet.org. See www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/hypermail/200009/0000.html accessed on 10 July 2006)

22 The term 'government-sponsored Islam' is borrowed from Shirin Akiner who uses it about Central Asian governments' attempts to co-opt Islam to serve the needs of the state (Akiner 2003).
23 My own translation.
24 My own translation.
25 On censorship in Uzbekistan, see Human Rights Watch 1999 and ICG 2001b.
26 A friend of mine who was studying at Bukhara State University complained that one of the compulsory subjects she had to take was one solely dedicated to the works of Karimov: a very expensive subject, as Karimov published one book after the other, all similar to each other, but still compulsory reading.
27 An example of the government control of the *muftiyat* is the fate of the last *mufti* of the Soviet era, Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf who developed an independent line that was intolerable for the authorities and was forced in exile in April 1993, accused of 'Wahhabi' sympathies. He was replaced by Hajji Muxtar Abdullaev, a Naqshbandi from Bukhara, who had not been educated abroad, while the Directorate Committee of Religious Affairs resumed control of the *muftiyat* (Akiner 2003: 103; Olcott 1995: 28–30; Roy 2000: 132–3, 158). As Shirin Akiner has noted, since the exile of Muhammad Sodiq the official Muslim hierarchy had been relegated to a subordinate role, remarkable chiefly for its unquestioning support of government policies (Akiner 2003: 103).
28 That is, written accounts of what the Prophet Muhammad said and did or of the tacit approval of something said or done in his presence. One of the great *Hadith* collectors, Imam al-Buxoriy (d. 870), was born in Bukhara and buried close to Samarkand.
29 In 1999, an Islamic University (a secular institution) was established in Tashkent.
30 That is, what is permitted to eat according to Islamic law.
31 Alisher Navoi (1441–1501) is considered Uzbekistan's national poet.
32 That is, the great philosopher-scientist (980–1037) who in the West is better known as Avicenna.
33 *Hech kimga bermaymiz seni O'zbekiston!* (We will not give you to anybody, Uzbekistan!) was a motto that was launched in 2000 with a big show, which took place in Tashkent on 10 July and was broadcast on national television. The show celebrated the nation and the Uzbek military: it started with representatives of the military demonstrating various kinds of combat situations and continued with performances by the most popular pop singers and bands in the country.
34 That is, a reference to the *O'zing uying o'zi asrang!* (Watch your own house!) campaign mentioned earlier in this chapter.
35 Like all other longer quotations this quotation is a translation from a tape-recorded and transcribed interview.
36 When the coup was crushed a few days later, Karimov faced an enormous challenge

of re-establishing credibility and reliability. He, then, made a u-turn: on 31 August he declared Uzbekistan's independence. On 14 September he banned the Uzbek Communist Party and created *Khalq Demokratik Partiyasi* (the People's Democratic Party). The People's Democratic Party, however, had virtually the same structure and membership as the former Communist Party (cf. Rashid 2002: 81).

37 The term '*Jadid*ism' came from the new (i.e. phonetic) method (usul-i-*Jadid*) of teaching the Arabic alphabet pioneered by Gasprinskii in the Crimea in the 1880s (Khalid 1998: 89).

38 As demonstrated by Adeeb Khalid in his excellent work *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform. Jadidism in Central Asia* (Khalid 1998), the *Jadid* movement in Central Asia was not only a copy of similar currents among emergent cultural elites in other Muslim regions of the Russian empire. It was also a locally grounded response to Russian rule and the processes of social and economic change set in motion by the Russian conquest.

39 Johan Rasanayagam has made a similar point in an interesting article about healing with the aid of spirits in Uzbekistan: 'In an environment where other forms of religious expression are circumscribed, these local practices have become an important site in which people are able to shape their sense of Muslim selfhood' (Rasanayagam 2006a: 378).

3 Sufism and the veneration of saints in Central Asia

1 Seven *avliyo* who were all important links in the Naqshbandiyya *silsila* (spiritual chain). See Chapter 4.

2 The term *domlo* means 'teacher' and is used as a general term for shrine guardians and religious authorities serving at shrines.

3 See also Privratsky (2001) who has discussed the importance of what he terms the *ayan* ('spiritual illumination') complex in Kazakhstan and Rasanayagam (2006a) who explores spiritual healing in Uzbekistan, proceeding from Thomas Csordas' idea that people can develop their sense of moral selfhood through 'imaginal' encounters which are interpreted as encounters with a divine Other.

4 This fusion of asceticism with devotional love of God has been attributed to Rabia al-Adawiyya (d. 801) (Esposito 1998: 101–2; Schimmel 1975: 38–40).

5 See for example Vincent Crapanzano's study of the Moroccan Hamadsha Sufi order (Crapanzano 1973).

6 In *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde. Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*, Dewin DeWeese sets out to analyse the conversion of the Golden Horde under Özbek Khan in the fourteenth century. This process of conversion took place under Baba Tükles of the Yasaviyya order. DeWeese proceeds from a reading of a narrative account, first written in the sixteenth century by Ötemish Hajji, of the conversion of the Golden Horde to Islam. DeWeese presents the conversion process as a dual process involving the introduction of Islamic patterns in a new environment, and the 'nativization' of these patterns through their incorporation and assimilation into indigenous modes of thought and action (DeWeese 1994).

7 See Chapter 6 for a presentation and discussion of these principles.

8 I usually asked the persons I interviewed to suggest other people for me to talk with – this was also the way I came to know most of the Naqshbandis I met during my fieldwork. I did interviews with 21 Naqshbandis and talked in a more informal manner with numerous others.

9 According to Gulchehra Navro'zova the number of men and women is about the same.

10 Bennigsen and Wimbush note that the only references to the presence of women in Central Asian brotherhoods concerns two radical and secret offshoots of the

Yasaviyya: the brotherhood of the Laachis and the radical 'Hairy Ishans' which have special women's groups with women *shaykh*s (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 68). They, however, also note, 'To date, no Soviet specialist has produced an estimate of the number of women belonging to the Sufi brotherhoods' (ibid.: 69).

11 Zarcone, more specifically, observed this in Tashkent and Ferghana, in Xojand and among the Uighurs of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan (Zarcone 2000a: 159).
12 Cf. Arabov 2004 on Sufis in Tajikistan.
13 For example, some of the leading figures in the Tatar *Jadid* modernist reform movement belonged to the Naqshbandiyya, while in the Bukhara Emirate and the Khanates of Kokand and Khiva the Naqshbandis were mostly conservative supporters of the autocratic government of the emirs which was firmly opposed to the *Jadid* reformers (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 3; Zarcone 1996: 66–8). In the words of Olivier Roy, the 'omnipresence of Sufism . . . relativizes its political role' (Roy 2000: 144).
14 *Yor* literally means 'beloved'.
15 Basso adopts Martin Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling' to denote the multiple 'lived relationships' that people maintain with places (Basso 1996: 54).
16 Bahouddin Naqshband is often mentioned as the 'founder' of the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa*. However, the Naqshbandiyya *silsila* (spiritual chain of transmission), like that of other Sufi orders, is traced back to the Prophet Muhammad (cf. Algar 1990a: 3–4).
17 According to McChesney, the history of the Bahouddin Naqshband shrine is difficult to track through history, in part because its administrative continuity was severed and its archives apparently dispersed during Soviet rule (McChesney 1996: 92).
18 See McChesney (1996) for an account of the great economic, social and political importance of the major shrine complexes in Central Asia in pre-Soviet times.
19 For a sketch of Soviet interpretation and preservation of Bukhara's ancient heritage, see Azzout 1999.
20 Cf. David Lowenthal who, in *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), has demonstrated how in the twentieth century the past has been treated as a 'foreign country' radically different from modern time, its relics being largely irrelevant to modern concerns.
21 People often used the Russian term *zakret* (closed) when talking about the fact that *ziyorat* was forbidden during Soviet times. Using the Russian term in discourses otherwise held in Uzbek or Tajik, it seems, they dissociate themselves from the practice of closing off and indicate that it is to be conceived as a foreign imposition.
22 For a review of this literature, see Schubel 1999.
23 That is, 'custom'; the way the Prophet Muhammad acted, which is then imitated by Muslims.
24 The city of Turkestan, being a centre of religious life associated with the Sufi tradition and the place of burial of Ahmet Yasavi, founder of the Yasaviyya Sufi *tariqa*, has a significance in Kazakhstan, which in many ways resembles that of Bukhara in Uzbekistan.

4 Bukhara

1 Criminals were allegedly thrown off the 47 metres tall Kalon Minaret, built in 1127 during the days of the Bukhara Emirate.
2 Yulduz Usmonova is a very popular singer in Uzbekistan.
3 According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad in 622 ascended to heaven, where he met with the prophets of the past, was given visions of heaven and hell, gazed upon God and was given the command of five prayers a day for all Muslims.
4 The local historian Narzulla Yo'ldoshev has written about the most well-known of them in his book *Buxoro avliyolarining tarixi* (The history of Bukhara's *avliyo*) (Yo'ldoshev 1997).
5 *Halal* denotes what is permitted according to Islamic law.

6 Arabic plural of *wali.* The term *wali* is seldom used. The plural form *avliyo* is commonly used as a singular. The Uzbek plural form, then, is *avliyolar. Avliyo*, however, is also commonly used as a plural form. In this book I use it as both singular and plural form.
7 That is, spiritual guide.
8 As also noted to be the case in Turkmenistan by David Tyson (Tyson 1997) and in Azerbaijan by Mark Saroyan (Saroyan 1997: 106).
9 According to Jürgen Paul the concept of the Seven *Pirs* is a modern invention. They are nowhere grouped together in this fashion in medieval sources (Paul 2002: 631).
10 This and the following dates according to Trimingham (1971).
11 For a hagiographic outline by a local scholar, see Sadriddin Salim Buxoriy (1993).
12 According to Annemarie Schimmel (1975).
13 According to legend, silkworms in Bukhara are descended from those that infested the body of Ayub. When God freed Ayub from his torments the worms migrated to a mulberry tree.
14 According to Farideh Heyat traditional healers in Central Asia are commonly assumed to have experienced a serious illness in their late childhood or early youth, not easily treatable, which then empowers them with their healing skill (Heyat 2004: 279).
15 According to Shirin Akiner they probably moved into the southwestern margin of Central Asia via Iran some time before the first century AD (Akiner 1997a: 366).
16 The Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia by Stalin in 1944 for allegedly collaborating with the Nazis (Uehling 2001).
17 Approximately 450,000 ethnic Koreans reside in the former USSR, primarily in the newly independent states of Central Asia. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, their forebears emigrated from the Korean peninsula to the Russian Far East, some of them in order to wage guerrilla warfare against Japanese colonial forces in Korea. In 1937, Stalin deported them to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, on the official premise that they might act as spies for Japan. Source: www.koryosaram.freenet.kz (accessed on 10 July 2006).
18 According to the UNDP *Human Development Report: Uzbekistan 1999*, the worst affected regions are the rural Ferghana Valley and rural Karakalpakstan (UNDP 1999: 26).
19 See for example Transparency International's 'Corruption Perceptions Index' on www.transparency.org (accessed on 10 July 2006)
20 Source: www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/uz.html (accessed on 10 July 2006).
21 By 2005, the Aral Sea – once the world's fourth largest inland body of water – had been reduced to just 15 per cent of its former volume. The people of the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan who once relied upon the sea for their livelihood are suffering severe economic hardship and health problems caused by the degraded environment (EJF 2005).
22 Source: www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/uz.html (accessed on 10 July 2006).
23 See Akiner (1997b) for an overview of the different aspects of the Soviet campaign for the emancipation of Central Asia's women.
24 See, for example, Kuehnast (1998), Michaels (1998); Megoran (1999).
25 See, for example, Harris (1996), Northrop (2004).
26 Notably exceptions are Rosamund Shreeves who, in her article 'Broadening the Concept of Privatization: Gender and Development in Rural Kazakhstan' (2002), addresses this question, pointing out what is also an argument here, namely that 'far from experiencing market reform as the herald of new entrepreneurial labour opportunities, many rural men have felt it as a kind of emasculation and overturning of their role and status' (ibid.: 224) and Colette Harris who, in her book *Control and*

Subversion. Gender Relations in Tajikistan (2004) demonstrates the ways in which Tajik society threatens men's masculinity, leading them to force family members into conformity. Harris points out that physical violence has been on the rise in proportion to the decrease in other ways of performing masculinity.

27 This is the case in other parts of Central Asia too. Cynthia Werner (1999) reports from the village of Qyzylqum (a pseudonym) in southern Kazakhstan that gifts were the single largest household expense (ibid.: 58).

28 *Mahalla* institutions are found in other parts of the Muslim world as well.

29 *Hokimiats*, in turn, are directly accountable to the central government as the president directly appoints and dismisses regional *hokimiat* leaders (*hokim*s) (Human Rights Watch 2003: 7).

30 The lists are sent to the *hokimiat* and the responsibility for the final decision on eligibility rests with the government-run Muslim Board of Uzbekistan (Human Rights Watch 2003: 9).

5 *Ziyorat*

1 Around one US dollar at that time.

2 *Kinna* or *ko'z* in Uzbek; *chashm* in Tajik. Here, I will use the English term 'evil eye' instead of the Uzbek and Tajik terms. I find the translation useful here because it is relatively straightforward (both *ko'z* and *chashm* meaning 'eye'), and because a representative use of local terms would involve at least three different terms, making the representation unnecessarily confusing.

3 *Ispan* means wild rye in Tajik; *hazar* means avoiding, caution, bewaring. *Dona* means item, piece. In Tajik the verse goes like this:

> *Hazorispan, hazordona,*
> *chashmi heshu – keshu,*
> *hamsoyayo girdi peshu,*
> *durkun az in xona.*

4 If the *ko'zmunchok* turns wholly black, it is said, it means that an evil eye is directed at the person wearing it.

5 See also Blackwell (2001: 39–40); Snesarev (1970–1: 341).

6 According to Sam Migliore, references to the evil eye can today be found throughout Europe, North and East Africa, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, the Philippines, Latin America and among various North American immigrant groups (Migliore 1997: 13).

7 For example *ko'zmunchok* pearls, cloves, red peppers or verses from the Qur'an written on a piece of paper and sewn into a piece of cloth or placed in a metal case.

8 About this pole, the *tug'*, see Note 12.

9 According to some researchers, the popularity of these pilgrimage sites in Soviet times was partly connected to the ban on pilgrimages to Mecca in the sense that the local sites substituted for this unattainable destination (see for example Atkin 1989: 25; Ibrahim 1993: 21; Lipovsky 1996: 4–5). During my fieldwork I was frequently presented with theories about the commensurability of local *ziyorat* and the *Hajj*: that it equalled one *Hajj* to visit all Bukhara's Seven *Pir*s in one day, or that it equalled three *Hajj*es to visit the shrine of Xoja Ka'bul Ahror Vali (cf. Chapter 7), for example.

10 Victor Turner, following Arnold van Gennep, distinguished 'liminoid' from 'liminal' phenomena. Whereas 'liminoid' phenomena are voluntary, 'liminal' phenomena belong to the mid-stage of obligatory rites of passage (Turner and Turner 1978: 35, 231).

11 In Central Asia, hagiography has played a crucial role, both at the level of 'high culture' – through the Chagatay poetry of Navoi and Mashrab and the highly

sophisticated Persia *tazkirah* (hagiography) tradition – and at the 'popular' level through oral narratives about the *avliyo* (Schubel 1999: 73).

12 The hand is also interpreted as a symbol of the 'five pillars' of Islam. I did not encounter the common interpretation in the Arab world that identifies the hand as 'Fatima's hand', a widely used protection against the evil eye and *djinns*, demons. The *tug'* is also equipped with a white piece of cloth and, in the case of male saints, a horse's tail. People I discussed this with were more in doubt about the symbolism of the cloth and the horse's tail. According to Subtelny (1989), the standard with the white cloth (originally camel or sheepskin, but frequently replaced by pieces of white cloth) is an element incorporated from shamanistic practices.

13 Alexander the Great invaded Central Asia in 329 BC, defeating the Persians, the Scythians who lived north of the Syrdaryo River and finally the Sogdians (the Persians had created the province of Sogdiana and Bactria covering much of present-day Uzbekistan). In Samarkand, Alexander killed his best friend Clitus and later married Roxana, daughter of the Sogdian chief Oxyartes. Alexander died in 323 BC (Rashid 1994: 84, 165).

14 This conceptualization comes close to the classical way Victor Turner conceived of pilgrimage. According to Turner, who based his theory primarily on studies of pilgrimage in the Christian tradition (Turner and Turner 1978), pilgrimage is structurally equivalent to a rite of passage and can thus be analysed similarly, that is, by using a theory similar to the theory of ritual he developed following Arnold van Gennep. Turner, more specifically, conceived pilgrimage as a liminoid, anti-structural phenomenon betokening the partial abrogation of the secular social structure, where actors are able to play upon or probe beneath the limits of conventional social understandings, juggle with the factors of existence and experience 'communitas'; that is, the direct, immediate, egalitarian sociality between human beings. A realm of potentiality. Turner's theory has been the object of much criticism. In place of the recurrence of 'communitas' a wide variety of behaviour and experiences have been found to characterize pilgrimages in different contexts. Social boundaries and distinctions, in many cases, have been found to be maintained and reinforced, rather than dissolved, in the pilgrimage context (cf. Eade and Sallnow 1991; Morinis 1992). Conceiving *avliyo* as focal points for recreating illusio – and thus the act of *ziyorat* as the act of recreating illusio – I bracket the question whether *ziyorat* supports or subverts established social orders, while preserving Turner's important point about the creative potential of liminality or liminoidity

15 To paraphrase Michael Herzfeld (1985: 16). Herzfeld, in his fine account of the poetics of manhood in the highland village of Glendi in Crete, notes that 'In Glendiot idiom, there is less focus on "being a good man" than on "being *good at* being a man" – a stance that stresses *performative excellence*, the ability to foreground manhood by means of deeds that strikingly "speak for themselves" ' (ibid.: 16). Much of the same may be said about the context of Uzbekistan. When men such as Tohir, however, fail in their performance, one of their ways to save face is to question the values embodied in it, to question its illusio.

16

Tokay ba ziyorati maqorib
Umrat guzaroniy, ey fasurda
Yak gurbai zinda nazdi orif
Behta zi hazor meri murda

17 Roger M. Keesing, in a discussion of the concept of resistance, notes that the conceptual prototype of resistance is of a physical force, experienced as impinging or pushing against the body; and of a pushing back against or obstruction of that force. This prototypic image allows multiple permutations; it can be metaphorically con-

structed in many ways (Keesing 1992: 219). I believe that physical paralysis, much in the same way, can be conceived as a prototype of loss of agency.

6 Journey of the homeland

1 After the death of Bobo Tesha, many became the *murid*s of Timurkhon, a *pir* in Samarkand.
2 Five is the highest mark given in the Uzbek educational system. Two and one are failing marks.
3 *Jihad* means 'effort'. Sufis talk about the struggle against the *nafs* as the greater *jihad.*
4 That is, prohibited according to Islamic law.
5 According to tradition, eight of these principles were transmitted by Abdulkholiq G'ijduvoniy. These are: *Xush dar dam* (awareness in breathing), *nazar bar qadam* (watching the steps), *safar dar vatan* (journey in the homeland), *xilvat dar anjuman* (solitude in the crowd), *yod kard* (remembrance), *boz gasht* (returning), *nigoh dosht* (attentiveness) and *yod dosht* (recollection). The last three – *vuqufi zamoniy* (awareness of time), *vuqufi adadiy* (awareness of number) and *vuqufi qalbiy* (concentration of the heart) – are attributed to Bahouddin Naqshband (cf. Buxoriy 1993: 31; Schimmel 1975: 364; Togan 1999: 17, note 3; Algar 1990a: 9).
6 Some – advanced – Naqshbandis perform the *zikr* of the five *lata'if*. The five *lata'if* are five subtle points in the body to which Allah gives light, and at which Satan attacks. Focusing the *zikr* in these points keeps Satan away; he is not able to attack. These *zikrs* are called *zikr qalbi*, *zikr ruhi*, *zikr siri*, *zikr xafaviy and zikr axfaviy.* Annemarie Schimmel (1975) quotes a late eighteenth century description by Khwaja Mir Dard of the more specific location of these points:

> He speaks of the *dhikr qalbi*, located in the heart at the left side of the breast, pronounced in love and longing; the *dhikr ruhi*, performed at the right side of the breast in quietude and tranquillity; the *dhikr sirri*, pronounced in intimacy, close to the left side of the breast; the *dhikr khafawi*, performed close to the right corner of the breast and connected with absence and extinction of the self; and the *dhikr akhfawi*, in the center of the breast, which is the sign of annihilation and consummation.
>
> (ibid.: 174)

7 One of the 11 principles central to the Naqshbandiyya's teaching is *boz gasht*, which means to return, to restrain one's thoughts in the *zikr*, when irrelevant thoughts are interrupting it. As Rano expressed it:

> A person is doing *zikr*. Once in a while irrelevant thoughts interrupt the *zikr.* That is, when you recollect Allah, you start thinking about whether your children will enter the university, for example. The *zikr* should only be for Allah, but we mix irrelevant thoughts with it. Therefore we must return. *Boz gast*, that means to return.

8 The very commonly used prefix *-xon* indicates a respectful and/or affectionate form of address.
9 Alisher described the Day of Judgment to me like this:

> After having entered the *tariqa*, the relationship between the Sufis should be so that they are also friends on the Day of Judgment. The Day of Judgment is such a day . . . on this day father and son do not know each other; man and wife do not know each other. The torments at death are so terrible that if all the torments Allah has given in this life, if they all are one, the torments at death are nine times worse. From the moment where God creates man from earth to the moment man loses his life – if all the torments this person experiences are one, the torments at death are nine times worse. When a person is dying his body becomes hot, red hot. If iron

can feel this heat, the iron melts. When the person is dead, he is brought to the grave. If his sins are serious, the torments in the grave are 99 times worse than the torments at death. When the person is dead . . . at the end of all life, the Day of Judgment starts. The torments at the Day of Judgment are 999 times worse than the torments in the grave. At the end of the Day of Judgment, people will be placed in two places: in paradise and in hell. The torments in hell are 9,999 times worse than the torments on the Day of Judgment. It is the duty of the *shaykh* to give his Sufis a good education and protect them against these torments. When a Sufi is dying, the *shaykh* will come and stand by his side in order that Satan cannot come. After he is dead and has been brought to the grave, the interrogation-angel comes and questions him there. At this moment the *shaykh* will also stand by your side and help you, when you are questioned. On the Day of Judgment . . . on this day the Muslims . . . that is, Muhammad's *umma* . . . the Muslims, being God's light, will stand in the first line. Those who have sinned, for example committed adultery; those who have lied . . . at the time when they are tormented, Muhammad's *umma*, our *shaykh* and Sufis with the *shaykh*, like light, will immediately go to paradise. After the Day of Judgment you have to pass a bridge . . . the bridge is like . . . it is sharper than a knife edge and thinner than a sewing thread. At that moment our *shaykh* . . . all Sufis will cling to the *shaykh*'s feet and pass the bridge with him. When people cross the bridge Satan will say, 'come in, come in!' Then our *shaykh* will throw the lowest Sufis in hell, because they did not practise the *tariqa* properly. At this moment, hell runs away. It runs billions of kilometres away . . . from the lowest Sufis . . . 'no, I will not accept them!' says hell.

10 Bahouddin Naqshband's name 'Naqshband' is said to indicate this, as its meaning can be interpreted as 'occupied (*band*) with engraving (*naqsh*)'. Another explanation of his name, which is often mentioned, however, is that it refers to the imprint (*naqsh*) of the name Allah, which Bahouddin made in his heart.

11 That is, Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–73).

12 *Darvish* is the Persian word for Sufi. Shuhrat more specifically refers to the 'wandering *darvish*es' who turned their backs at society and often expressed radical social criticism.

13 In Uzbek: *Ibodat o'n qismdan iborat.*

14 In Uzbek: *Sendan harakat, mendan barakat.*

7 Imagining time

1 Source: www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/hypermail/200004/0007.html (accessed on 1 August 2006).

2 I use the concept of 'emplotment' as it has been defined by Cheryl Mattingly (1998). Mattingly proceeds from a rethinking of Aristotle's distinction between the historical narrative, which is a sheer imitation of action and the poetic narrative, which has a plot. Poetic imitation is not a simple representation of events, for actual events are particular and happen by random chance. Poetic imitation does not simply tell what happened, but deals with universals, and does so through plots, which place actions within a coherent and teleological whole with a beginning, middle and end, and which provide a moral perspective on events (ibid.: 16–17; 28–9). By emplotting the events they recount, furthermore, narrators have perlocutionary motives. They seek to seduce the listeners into the world they portray, thereby convincing them to see reality in a particular way and guide their future actions in a particular way (ibid.: 5–8).

3 Bahodir sometimes, as here, used the correct Arabic singular form *wali* instead of *avliyo*.

4 As I have already observed, this is related to a more general downplaying of the social significance of consciousness, abstraction and reflexivity: in Bourdieu's

scheme of things actors are granted little opportunity to reflect on their conditions of existence (cf. Chapter 1 and Comaroff 1985: 5; Starrett 1990: 93; Strathern 1996: 28).

5 That is, as direct subjective knowledge of the world and the sensory basis of this knowledge.

6 Desjarlais, it should be noted, does not mention Mattingly in his critique of narrative theory.

7 As in Fredrik Barth's definition, i.e. 'what people employ to interpret and act on the world: feelings as well as thoughts, embodied skills as well as taxonomies and other verbal models' (Barth 1995: 66)

8 *Oymullo* is the term for female *mullah* that I encountered most frequently in Bukhara and therefore use here. The *oymullo* is a female Muslim dignitary who oversees the lives of other women believers and recites prayers on the occasion of various rituals (see also Fathi 1997; Krämer 2002). Other terms for female *mullah* are *otin* and *xalfa* (see also Krämer 2002).

9 As Olivier Roy has noted,

> Soviet society concealed the deep duality between the nomenclatura and ordinary people by a whole system of distinctions and honours: medals for old soldiers and model workers, days dedicated to different professional categories etc. Everybody had an opportunity, at one time or other, to be, if not famous, at least honoured. What appeared to the outside observer a posed ritual (formal photographs on the front pages of newspapers showing model workers who for a moment have escaped their anonymity; rolls of honour at the entrances to factories etc.) was experienced and lived as a social recognition.
>
> (Roy 2000: 164)

10 A long, wide garment, which covers the body entirely and which has a woven screen covering the face (Fathi 1997: 29; Lobacheva 1997: 66).

11 Jokes, however, also circulate on Internet communities – for example the website www.ozodovoz.org run by *Ozod Ovoz*, 'Free Voice', an Uzbek NGO committed to the promotion and protection of freedom of speech in Uzbekistan. The website was blocked on 2 September 2003. Here is an example found on the site just before it was blocked:

> On the central square in Tashkent a person killed a woman before a crowd of people and several policemen and quietly left the square. The crowd was very upset, and the Ministry of Interior Affairs was called. A general arrived on the spot and threw himself on the policemen.
>
> *– Idlers, why haven't you detained the murderer? I shall dismiss you!*
>
> The policemen answered:
> *– Sorry Mr. General, today we forgot to bring along drugs and Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets.*
>
> (The joke hints at the alleged widespread practice among the Uzbek police of planting evidence such as drugs or forbidden religious literature on innocent people.)

8 Doing business with Bibi Seshanba

1 As is illustrated by this joke, which was recounted to me by a young woman:

> Every day a man passed a beggar, and every day he gave him ten *so'm*. One day, the man only gave the beggar one *so'm*. 'Why do you only give me one *so'm*?' asked the beggar in an injured tone. The man told him that it was because he was about to arrange his son's marriage. 'What!' said the beggar, 'am I supposed to pay for your son's wedding?'

2 This is what the ritual is called in the Tajik-speaking areas of Uzbekistan such as Bukhara. In Uzbek it is called *Oshi Bibi Seshanba.*
3 According to Igor Lipovsky (1996), Bibi Seshanba and Bibi Mushkul Kushod are originally pre-Islamic female deities which were later Islamicized.
4 See Krämer (2002) and Kandiyoti and Azimova (2004) for accounts of the Bibi Mushkul Kushod ritual. The two related rituals may be performed together.
5 Take for example Sergei Poliakov (1992), who made a harsh critique of the state of affairs in the Soviet Central Asian countryside, including women's status here. Poliakov pointed out that in spite of all the efforts of the Soviet government to emancipate them, women continued to occupy a subservient position in society, enjoying no rights save the rights to work and bear children (ibid.: 63), leading an 'unthinking' life within the family sphere (ibid.: 84), and believing the keepers of shrines without question (ibid.: 108). For comments on the way Central Asian women were represented by Soviet scholars and authorities, see also Kamp 2004: 57; Megoran 1999; Tyson 1997.
6 *Dasturxon* means 'tablecloth'. The English translation is, however, somewhat confusing in that the *dasturxon* usually is placed on the floor – and is also used as a general term for hospitality offered at the table/floor.
7 This version of the story was recounted to me by the *oymullo* who led the other *Osh Bibiyo* that is treated in this chapter.
8 See also Krämer (2002: 183ff) and Kandiyoti and Azimova (2004: 341) for slightly different versions of the story.
9 Otherwise, the hostess will carry it out.
10 According to Annette Krämer (2002) there are regional variations regarding the rules of the performance of the ritual and the orders in which things are done.
11 The candles were typically explained as reflecting women's wish to 'live in light' – happily and according to the will of God – while one *oymullo* more prosaically explained that it was a good device for having children. The bowls with sweetened milk and water were commonly interpreted as reflecting the wish that everything at home should be 'sweet' – also with a couple of more prosaic variants, namely that drinking the milk and the water would make one healthy, or that it would make a woman's husband love her in case he did not. Two *oymullo*s explained their blowing at the milk and water as some kind of *magi* (Russian), magic, used to make the water and milk sacred. All would agree that smoke from wild rye that is set on fire is a protection against the evil eye. The flour, by some, was seen as a symbol of fertility. Others told that Bibi Seshanba would sometimes show that she had been present during the ceremony by leaving hand or fingerprints in the flour (some said that she always did, unless the hostess had prepared the ceremony for stolen money). The *o'moch* was, similar to the flour, seen as a symbol of fertility, or as a device for creating fertility.
12 In Nargiza's family it was only married women who attended the *Osh Bibiyo*.

9 Conclusion: faraway so close

1 See Heyat (2002) on the concept of *musulmanchilik* in Azerbaijan and Privratsky (2001) on the concept of *musilmanshiliq* in Kazakhstan.

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