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The Impact of Political Islam on Cultural Practices in Badakhshan, Afghanistan, during the Taliban Era

by

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of The Australian National University

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the text of the thesis. I hereby also certify that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Bruce Koepke

Date: 9 October 2002
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The complexities of conducting research in and on Afghanistan have meant that I am indebted to a large number of people for their assistance. First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to all the people of Badakhshan as well as Afghans in Pakistan, Tajikistan, Germany, and Australia who were involved with my research. Their hospitality, comments, insights, and performances – in particular in Badakhshan, at a time of civil war, great uncertainty and existential hardship – shaped the nature and focus of this research. Unfortunately, at this point in Afghanistan’s political history, I am unable to thank all contributors by name.

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Abstract

This thesis examines cultural practices in Badakhshan, Afghanistan, in an era when its political rulers – the Islamic State of Afghanistan under President Rabbani and military commanders of an anti-Taliban alliance – promoted a strict code of Islamic conduct. It offers the first detailed account of social and political life in Badakhshan, and is one of few commentaries on Afghanistan's culture, since the Soviet invasion in 1979.

The study of diverse genres of performances – religious, sport, music, and dance – serves as an effective and unique means of illuminating the complex interrelationships between politics, Islam and society in Afghanistan. While the actual research in Badakhshan Province was undertaken in 1998 and 1999, the analysis is not limited to that period; rather, performances are situated historically and, most specifically, during the political regimes of the last three decades.

Drawing on the academic fields of political science, history, anthropology, and ethnomusicology, the major conclusion of this interdisciplinary research is that culture in Badakhshan is inextricable from politics and religion. The elucidation of the conflicting religious and political ideologies prevalent in the Taliban era further highlights the existence of tensions between Afghan and Islamic identities and controversies as to the legality of performance in Islam.
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Map 1: Central Asia (adapted from ReliefWeb in Goodson 2001:134)
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Introduction

*Badakhshan*

Your soil is like a bed for a brave man;
Your soil is like a red flower in the spring and summer;
   Full of beautiful scent;
Your mountains and deserts are green;
Your place is proud of the blood of martyrs.

Badakhshan, your earth will be green and full of flowers;
   Your aged and youth will be generals;
   Your people will wake up from their slumber;
   And drive a sword into the heart of the enemy;
   All your mountains are full of precious stones.¹

(Shams Ali Shams, 1967).

This thesis describes and analyses cultural performances in Badakhshan, Afghanistan’s most north-eastern province (see Maps 2 and 3), at the end of the twentieth century. This was a unique historical period in Afghanistan, a time marked by the convergence of political and Islamic ideologies as manifest in the ultra-extremist militia of the Taliban and the more moderate Islamic State of Afghanistan, the administration officially recognised by the United Nations. Both of these ruling authorities however, promulgated a strict Islamic code of conduct that severely curtailed the free expression of non-religious cultural

¹ Excerpts of “Badakhshan”, a poem written in 1967 by Dr Shams Ali Shams in Faizabad, Badakhshan. In 1998, the poem was first read and then later offered to me as a gift in the form of a hard copy. With the assistance of an expatriate Afghan in Australia, the poem was translated in 2000 from Dari into English.
performances throughout the country. Cultural performances thus became increasingly and inherently political and religious in nature.

Accordingly, the key argument of this thesis is that cultural performances in Badakhshan, Afghanistan, are inextricable from their historical, social, political, and religious contexts. Concomitantly, cultural performances in themselves may not only reflect but provide active commentaries on the relationships between politics, religion and society in this conservative and remote, mountainous region. Indeed, not only were the circumstances of many performance events fraught with religious and political tensions and concerns, but both religious and non-religious performances themselves evinced social and political themes. Of central importance to this thesis are the turbulent political changes of the last two and a half decades and the string of political regimes and ideologies propounded during this period – Republic, Soviet-backed Communist, Islamist, ultra-extremist Arab-influenced Islamic, and currently a pro-United States embryonic democracy. Significantly, these diverse forms of government have been accompanied by shifts in interpretations of what is and is not legitimate (halal) Islamic conduct. I shall seek to highlight the impact of these changing political and religious perceptions and affiliations by an historical overview of the role and place of a variety of cultural performances – religious, sport, music, and dance – in Badakhshan and Afghanistan. However, since I conducted extensive field research in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999, I shall therefore be primarily concerned with explicating the position of religious and non-religious cultural practices during the most conservative period in Badakhshan's modern history, that is the final five years of the Islamic State of Afghanistan under President Burhanuddin Rabbani (1992-2001).2

While the eyes of the world have focussed on the major contestants in Afghanistan’s complex civil war and, more recently, on its all-too-frequent humanitarian disasters, the impact of over twenty-three years of fighting and civil unrest on Afghan culture continues to be largely ignored. It was not until March 2001 with the destruction of the Buddha statues in Bamiyan, central Afghanistan, that international concerns were seriously raised about the Taliban’s determination to implement their controversial Islamic doctrines against Afghanistan’s local and pre-Islamic heritage. Yet this blatant and public defiance of international conventions on cultural heritage represented

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2 Unless otherwise stated, the numbers that appear in the parentheses indicate the period of rule.
the tip of the iceberg with respect to human rights abuses within Afghanistan. Moreover, the global impact of what was developing under the Taliban’s patronage was felt on the morning of September 11, 2001, when the world awoke to an unprecedented act of terrorism in the heart of the United States. The suicide bombings in New York and Washington had targeted two seemingly invincible symbols of the might of the world’s only superpower and the pervasive ethos of capitalism.

Just prior to the bombardment of Taliban territories led by the United States in October 2001, the orthodox militia ruled approximately seventy percent of Afghanistan. In their territories, all non-Islamic practices had been officially banned. The remainder of the country was controlled by an anti-Taliban alliance under the helm of the first Islamic government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, a local Badakhshi, and its defence minister, Ahmad Shah Massoud. From 1998, Badakhshan served as the home of the internally exiled Rabbani government, offering the Islamic State of Afghanistan its only functioning airport as well as an important overland supply route with Tajikistan, its non-Taliban-aligned neighbour. Indeed, Badakhshan remained the only Afghan province that successfully evaded the control of the Taliban. Inevitably, however, more than three years of constant resistance effected a profound toll on Badakhshan’s economy and social life.

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, which were allegedly masterminded from within Taliban-controlled areas by the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden through his al Qaeda terrorist network, Afghanistan has become a primary locus of the world’s attention as well as the site of international military engagement. Such an extraordinary historical about-turn was unimaginable at the time of my fieldwork. After having successfully defeated the Soviet invaders and then having witnessed a proxy war of internecine fighting between Islamic and Islamist factions, few Afghans would have believed it possible that the Taliban would be defeated and peace finally brokered with the assistance of the United States of America.

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3 Pakistan was the only one of Afghanistan’s neighbours that was aligned with the Taliban.
A Review of Relevant Literature

While numerous studies have described historical, political and humanitarian developments in Afghanistan, especially since the beginning of Soviet-backed Communist rule in 1978, there is a dearth of literature concerning its cultural heritage and practices. Moreover, whilst a limited number of academic publications from the disciplines of history, anthropology, political science, geography, and ethnomusicology have specifically commented on the province of Badakhshan, most of this research was conducted prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Indeed, with the exception of this study, virtually no research has been conducted in Badakhshan from 1979 until the present day. Furthermore, no other study has explicitly utilised an interdisciplinary methodology as a means of elucidating the nexus between culture, politics and religion in Afghanistan.

The first significant documentation of Badakhshan occurred during the period of the political ‘Great Game’ between Tsarist Russian-Central Asia and British India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when British, Russian, Hungarian, and Danish adventurist officers occasionally returned with reports pertaining to the strategically located province. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first major academic entry on Badakhshan was produced by the Russian W. W. Barthold (1987 (1913)) while his fellow Russian, T. G. Abaeva (1964) published the province’s first comprehensive political history (see Grevemeyer 1982:19).

A number of local scholars have also written historical accounts of the province, which I shall indirectly draw upon in establishing the broader ethnographic, social, political, and religious context of performance events. The most important local source on which Abaeva’s monograph draws extensively is A. H. Boldirev’s (1959) Russian translation of the Persian Tarikh-e Badakhshan (‘History of Badakhshan’). Mullah Sang Mohammad has been credited as the most likely author of this important historical manuscript that surfaced in 1913 and that covers the period from 1657-1808/1809 (see Grevemeyer 1982:20). A second Tarikh-e Badakhshan based on Mullah Sang

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4 Some of these British officers included Alexander Burnes (1834), William Moorcroft and George Trebeck (1971 (1841)), John Wood (1841), Charles Masson (1974 (1842)), and Thomas Douglas Forsyth (1875). The Hungarian adventurer Arminius Vámbéry also reported from the region (1865) as did the Danish Lieutenant Ole Olufsen (1904) from the Pamir region. See also Grevemeyer (1982:18) for a list of other Russian scholars.
Mohammad’s original manuscript, was discovered in Andijan, in contemporary Uzbekistan, by Mirza Fazl Beg who subsequently updated it until 1907 (see Grevemeyer 1976:63; 1982:20). It was this second document that served as the source for Boldirev’s translation. A third version of a *Tarikh-e Badakhshan* was found in 1970 by the Kabuli historian Humuyan Sarwar who names Mohammad Reza Badakhshi as its author (see Grevemeyer 1982:20). In 1973, K. Mohammad Zadeh and M. Shah-Zadeh, two teachers from Gorno-Badakhshan (contemporary Tajikistan), published another history of Badakhshan in Persian which was also called *Tarikh-e Badakhshan* (Mohammad-Zadeh and Shah-Zadeh 1973). This history is largely based on oral accounts and focuses primarily on the history of Sheghnan, an Ismaili-inhabited region in north-eastern Badakhshan (see Map 3). In 1922, Nader Shah, who was later to become the first of Afghanistan’s Musahiban rulers (1929-1933) commissioned the Afghan historian Burhan al-Din Khan Koshkaki to write a further history of Badakhshan, *Rahnama-ye Qataghan wa Badakhshan* (‘Guide to Kataghan and Badakhshan’) (see also Grevemeyer 1982:21; Kreutzmann 1996:31). Koshkaki’s source was also that of oral traditions and was published in Kabul in 1923. More recently, the Badakhshi anthropologist Nazif Shahrani (1978a; 1978b; 1979; 1984a), who is now resident in the United States, published an ethnography of the Kirghiz of the Wakhan Corridor. Shahrani has also written extensively on the impact of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its post-Soviet governance.

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5 Gorno-Badakhshan, an abbreviation for *Gorno-Badakhshanskaja Avtonomnaja Oblast* was once part of the historical Badakhshan and is now located in the Republic of Tajikistan. Cultural links between the two Badakhshans remain. Gorno-Badakhshan was integrated into the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1924 and later, in 1929, incorporated into the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic of Tajikistan (see Kreutzmann 1996:118).

6 See ethnographic descriptions of the Ismailis, a Shiite sect, in Chapters Three and Five.

7 Musahiban is a lineage name whose members were the descendants of Sultan Mohammad Khan, a brother of *Amir* Dost Mohammad (1819-1839). The family had been exiled to India, where many of the leading members were educated. In 1901, they were allowed to return. In 1929, Amir Amanullah (1919-1929) was officially replaced by the Musahiban government of Nadir Shah upon his overthrow of the Tajik rebel Habibullah Kalakani who had earlier deposed Amanullah and briefly taken control of the capital Kabul (see Gregorian 1969:220). Afghanistan’s last Musahiban monarch was Nadir Khan’s son Zahir Shah (1933-1973), who was deposed in a coup by his cousin Mohammad Daoud in 1973.

8 A. A. Semenov published an earlier translation into Russian in 1926. Marguerite Reut’s (1979) French translation of Burhan al-Din Khan Koshkaki’s account was published as *Qataghan et Badakhshan: Description du pays d’après l’inspection d’un ministre afghan en 1922* (‘Kataghan and Badakhshan: Description of the Territory according to the Inspection by an Afghan Minister in 1922’).
I shall also draw upon a range of academic research that was conducted in the region prior to Communist rule by a number of German scholars in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, history, and geography: Peter Snoy (1964; 1965; 1985; 1996), Friedrich Kussmaul (1965a; 1965b; 1967), Erwin Grötzbach (1972; 1979), Jan-Heeren Grevemeyer (1976; 1982; 1975), Wolfgang Holzwarth (1975; 1980; 1990), Wolfgang Lentz (1978), and Walter Raunig (1978). In addition, the Austrian historian Ludwig Adamec provides comprehensive historical and ethnographic information in his compilation Badakhshan Province and Northeastern Afghanistan (1972), including information obtained by British Indian intelligence officers that was first published in 1914 in the Gazetteer of Afghanistan.

Although the focus of this thesis is not primarily historical, the history and ethnography of Badakhshan are critical to the analysis of cultural performances in this province and the explication of their social, religious and political themes and contexts. I will primarily draw upon the two excellent works on the province by the anthropologist and historian Jan-Heeren Grevemeyer (1976; 1982; 1975), especially his Herrschaft, Raub und Gegenseitigkeit: Die politische Geschichte Badakhshans 1500-1883 (‘Rule, Bounty and Reciprocity: The Political History of Badakhshan, 1500-1883’), and the sociologist and historian Wolfgang Holzwarth (1980; 1990) who has produced an excellent monograph Vom Fürstentum zur afghanischen Provinz: Badakhshan 1880-1935 (‘From Princedom to Afghan Province: Badakhshan 1880-1935’). Since these authors conducted field research, which they then complemented with the extensive use of local, Afghan, Russian, and British sources, their publications are an invaluable source of ethnographic data on Badakhshan.9 Grevemeyer’s historical analysis discusses issues of the feudal system of Badakhshan and its anarchic rule and segmentation (1982:248) whereas Holzwarth describes the more recent history of the province up until the mid-1930s. These two accounts are thus complementary in establishing the historical context of this analysis.

I spent a considerable amount of time and recorded a number of performance events in Badakhshan’s Pamir Mountains. This remote region and that of the adjoining Wakhan Corridor have attracted considerable attention from

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9 In addition to the local and Russian sources that have already been mentioned here, Grevemeyer consults the Afghan histories by Abdulhay Habibi and Mayel Herawi’s Rahname-ye tarikh-e Afghanestan (‘Guide to Afghanistan’s History’) (1969-1970). Holzwarth refers extensively to sources that he obtained from the London India Office Records and the National Archives of India in New Delhi. Both authors cite the important Afghan historian Mir Ghulam Mohammed Ghobar’s Afghanistan dar masir-e tarikh (1967).
geographers and geologists. Several expeditions into the Wakhan-Pamir region are well documented in edited books such as that by Karl Gratzl and Roger Senarczens de Grancy (1973) of the 1970 Austrian scientific expedition, and by Roger Senarczens de Grancy and Robert Kostka (1978) of the Austrian expedition of 1975. Like Nazif Shahrani, Rémy Dor and Clas Naumann (1978) also wrote extensively about Kirghiz culture in the Wakhan corridor. Several scholars have specifically commented on the Sevene Shiite Ismaili sectarian minority who inhabit regions in north- and south-eastern Badakhshan. This research is particularly pertinent since the only public music and dance performances I observed in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999 arose among Ismailis for whom such practices are permissible. Similarly, during his research in the early twentieth century, the German anthropologist Arved von Schultz (1914) described a number of religious and cultural practices in the Pamir region. Peter Snoy and Friedrich Kussmaul, as well as the Swiss anthropologists Irene von Moos and Edwin Huwyler (1983; 1986), conducted most of their research with Ismailis in south-eastern Badakhshan in the 1960s and 1970s respectively. More recent studies on the Ismailis of Badakhshan were undertaken by the German geographer Hermann Kreutzmann (1996), who produced a comprehensive account of the inter-ethnic relations of various ethnic groups in the Wakhan trans-border region. His monograph includes not only extensive data on the Ismailis of this region but also on Badakhshan in general.

The inherently political nature of cultural performances in Badakhshan in the late 1990s necessitates a political focus in this thesis. Political commentaries on Badakhshan include the work of the political scientist Hafizullah Emadi (1993; 1998) whose analysis of Ismaili communities in north-eastern Badakhshan describes the political and religious oppression that led some elite members of their communities to embrace socialist ideas during the Communist period (1978-1989). The French political scientist Gilles Dorronsoro (1992) specifically discusses a number of mujahideen (Islamic resistance fighters)\(^\text{10}\) in Badakhshan, who had advanced to powerful political positions by the early post-Communist period in 1991. Interestingly, although many of the above mentioned authors fleetingly comment on opium consumption and production in Badakhshan, only a few researchers, such as von Moos, Huwyler (1986; 1980) and, more recently, Jonathan Goodhand (2000) have specifically addressed this controversial and sensitive issue.

\(^{10}\) The Arabic mujahideen is the plural noun of mujahid (Islamic resistance fighter) and literally means Islamic “warriors in the way of God” (Maley 1998:9).
The only detailed tourist guide to have been published on Afghanistan is Nancy Hatch Dupree’s *An Historical Guide to Afghanistan* (1977), which includes a section on Badakhshan. Due to the Marxist coup and subsequent civil war that soon followed, however, tourists and researchers have become rare commodities throughout Afghanistan in recent decades. Concomitantly, even the most recent accounts of Badakhshan that have been mentioned in this review, are limited to descriptions of conditions prior to the Communist coup of April 1978.

The final collection of relevant literature dealing with Badakhshan is that of the ethnomusicological studies undertaken by the Americans Mark Slobin (1976) and Lorraine Sakata (1983) who recorded musical traditions in a number of urban areas in Badakhshan in pre-Communist Afghanistan. Slobin’s descriptive and structural analysis of musical traits in *Music in the Culture of Northern Afghanistan* is one of the first major works to have examined music in Afghanistan. Slobin discusses music in various subcultures and geographic settings in northern Afghanistan, focussing predominantly on their similarities and differences, and commenting particularly on the trans-ethnic music traditions of Tajiks and Uzbeks. His study was influenced by Fredrik Barth (1969; 1981 (1960)), particularly in terms of his categorisation of ethnic groups, boundaries and divisions. Sakata’s monograph *Music in the Mind: The Concepts of Music and Musician in Afghanistan* (1983) is similarly divided into three related Persian-speaking, yet geographically distinct regions in Afghanistan. Her linguistically based musical analysis while drawing on ‘emic’ (local) understandings of musical and social concepts, primarily examines the concept of music and musicians from an ‘etic’ (analytical) perspective.

 Whilst not having conducted research in Badakhshan, John Baily is the third ethnomusicologist to have conducted extensive fieldwork in Afghanistan and who continues to publish widely on Afghan music. Like the studies by Slobin and Sakata, Baily’s *Music of Afghanistan, Professional Musicians in the City of Herat* (1988) was conducted in pre-Communist Afghanistan. Yet unlike the two American researchers, he focuses primarily on one social group, the

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11 The German musicologist and ethnomusicologist Felix Hoerburger (1969) published the first major work on Afghan music *Volksmusik in Afghanistan: nebst einem Exkurs über Qor‘ān-Rezitation und Thora-Kantillation in Kabul* (Folk music in Afghanistan: Together with an Excursion into Quran recitation and Torah cantillation).

12 Barth is an exponent of maximisation strategies and individualist theory-of-games theory, which demonstrated how individuals “invested their resources” (Eriksen 1995:155).

13 See glossary for comments on the emic/etic distinction.
professional hereditary musicians of Herat. Baily gives a history of Herati music, especially the emergence of an urban style of art music, and in describing the social organisation and context of the music performances of hereditary musicians, provides valuable insights into local music theory and music genres, and highlights the ways in which the music of this city reflects its social context. In addition to these specific ethnomusicological studies, a number of scholars have examined the relationship between music and Islam.\(^\text{14}\)

Other than some general remarks in Slobin’s and Sakata’s ethnomusicological studies, Badakhshan’s dance traditions have remained unresearched. In fact, even within the context of Afghanistan, the only accounts of dance derive from research undertaken prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979. Some rare data on women’s dances in Herat is presented by Veronica Doubleday (1988), who conducted her research with her husband John Baily, and by the American Katherine St. John (1993; 1995). John Baily’s (1988) excellent study of musicians in Herat also mentions men’s solo dances. The only other research on dance in Afghanistan was conducted by the German Ingeborg Baldauf (1988), who provides unique insights into the specific genre of dancing boys in north-western Afghanistan.

The paucity of available literature on dance and Islam in general comes initially as a surprise since dancing is a common feature of the cultural heritage of many Muslim societies.\(^\text{15}\) For the most part, the available sources are historical (see for example And 1976) and pseudo-historical works (see for example Buonaventura 1989; Friedlander 1975), as well as articles with a strong Orientalist tone (see for example Berger 1961; Meri 1961). Most materials are preoccupied with Sufi dances, particularly those of the ‘whirling dervishes’, and the raqs al-sharqi (oriental dance) which is commonly and


\(^{15}\) The following authors have dealt with the topic of dance and Islam: al Faruqi (1976/77; 1978), Hamada (1978), Schimmel (1975), And (1976), Lewisohn (1997), and Shay (1995; 1999). There are also numerous ethnographies that have discussed various aspects of dance. These sources occasionally refer to dance in an Islamic setting within a wider anthropological or historical discourse, but mostly only pertaining to the specific group studied. For examples, see Chelkowski (1979), Crapanzano (1973), Levin (1996), Lindholm (1982), Schmid (1997), Barth (1981 (1960)), Eickelman (1976), and Gellner (1969). Several other authors have commented on the practice of Sufi dance and its relation to Islam. For examples, see Tringham (1998 (1971)), Ritter (1955), And (1976), Arberry (1950), Chittick (1983), Schimmel (1975; 1980).
derogatorily known in the West as 'dance du ventre' or 'belly dance' (al Faruqi 1976/77:45). However, the work of Lois al Faruqi (1976/77; 1978; 1985) is notable for her attempts to provide a definition of dance in Muslim societies. In addition, Anthony Shay (1999) presents the first major anthropological account of the dances of mostly American Iranians. His study aims to unravel the significance of improvised Iranian solo dances and also provides a comprehensive review of dance in an Islamic context (see also Shay 1995). Indeed, with the exception of the research conducted by al Faruqi (1978) and Shay (1995; 1999), detailed analyses of the dances of Muslims in Central and South Asia as well as in the Middle East remain virtually non-existent. The gap in research on cultural performances in Badakhshan as well as in Afghanistan more generally since 1979, has been addressed by this author in a number of publications (2000a; 2000c; 2000d; 2001). These articles discuss Badakhshan’s cultural heritage during the Rabbani Presidency and comment on the controversies of performance in the conservative Islamic context of Afghanistan.

In comparison with the ethnomusicological studies on Badakhshan and Afghanistan, this thesis addresses cultural performances with a unique interdisciplinary approach that draws upon the academic fields of political science, history, anthropology, and ethnomusicology. I propose that this focus not only facilitates unique insights into the nature and practice of cultural performances in Badakhshan during the Taliban era but in so doing, illuminates the diversity of political, religious and social agendas that underpin the contexts and content of cultural performances. Although as will become clear in the ensuing discussion, the legalities of music, dance and sport are closely connected, the aesthetic practice of dance is generally seen to be an especially controversial practice in Islamic societies. For that reason, it will be specifically addressed. Clearly, this work addresses the silence that exists in both academic and general literature about Afghanistan’s culture. More specifically, it provides a detailed historical overview of Badakhshan with a particular emphasis on Islam, culture and politics and their interconnections during the late 1990s. However, this thesis is not explicitly ethnographic since I am mainly concerned with those individuals and groups who were associated in some way with performances in Badakhshan during my field research. Furthermore, in comparison with more conventional ethnomusicological

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16 An Arabic term denoting a woman’s improvised dance that is common in the Arab world, but also performed in other Islamic nations such as Iran, Afghanistan and the Muslim Central Asian states. In Afghanistan, this dance is called *raqi sharqi.*
Introduction

studies, this analysis of music and dance performances does not employ specialised trait lists such as musical or dance notation, nor are music qualities extensively and exhaustively described or analysed. Instead, filmed excerpts of performances are included that allow the reader to gain a more immediate experience of performance events. Indeed, I suggest that this use of film is more congruent with the primary intention of this thesis, which is to elucidate the broader political, social and religious frameworks and meanings of the performance events observed in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999.

Issues Related to the Methodology

In order to interpret the processes, relationships and meanings of cultural performances in Badakhshan, which are by nature extremely polysemous, this study draws on a Peircean semiotic analysis wherein cultural practices are viewed as systems of signs. This methodology facilitates a multiplicity of interpretations of both linguistic and extra-linguistic performances with particular emphasis on the explication of their social and ideological contexts.

Undoubtedly, the analysis of ‘inside’ cultural practices by an ‘outside’ researcher is inherently problematic, since the researcher’s interpretation of an event is likely to differ in many respects from local interpretations. This potential for a variety of interpretations is both an asset and a disadvantage. While the performances certainly left an impact on me as the researcher, my retrospective interpretations have facilitated a deeper understanding of the events and their further “possibilities of signification” (Mills 1991:24). Certainly, it is always inherently difficult to comprehend exactly how performances are understood by participants, and even more so in a cross-cultural situation. This dilemma was further compounded in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999 when the political and religious censorship of non-religious cultural practices by local authorities meant that it was virtually impossible to discuss events with participants and/or audiences. I was left with impressions of emotions as embodied in such actions as clapping or laughing, or in postures of apprehension or avoidance. As much as possible, therefore, local terms and categories are employed and reflected upon in the analysis so as to ensure that interpretations of performances closely reflect the indigenous understandings and responses – linguistic or extra-linguistic – that were available. At the same time, however, I believe that the sensitive application of non-local analytical categories may assist with the critical interpretation of cultural performances.
and in the delineation of their broader social and political relations, which may not be directly or consciously available to local observers.

This study was conducted in a conservative Muslim environment. As a male researcher, I had access only to cultural practices that were performed by males in the male domain. For this reason, I use the pronoun ‘he’ throughout the thesis. Since my research occurred during a specific historical time – 1998 and 1999 – and place – the province of Badakhshan – the events will be recalled in the past tense. Only events that pertain to the time of writing will appear in present tense.

*Research in a Politically Unstable Territory*

Given Afghanistan’s precarious political situation at the time of my research, the physical task alone of reaching Badakhshan was not only time-consuming, but extremely challenging. Indeed, the only legal means of entering the province was with the humanitarian flights of the United Nations (henceforth UN) or International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that irregularly went to the provincial capital Faizabad from northern Pakistan. Consequently, I initially spent a lengthy period in Islamabad and Peshawar, liaising with the staff of various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that dealt with the provision of assistance to Afghanistan.

Issued with a visa valid for travel only to anti-Taliban territories, I arrived in March 1998 at Faizabad airport, a Soviet-built runway composed of corrugated steel sheets. Although the air traffic control facilities had been destroyed during the *jihad* (Islamic resistance)\(^{17}\) against the Communist regime, this airport remained Badakhshan’s only serviceable port for small aircraft. Upon arrival, I was faced with yet another problem. With the exception of a number of international humanitarian aid workers, the province had received few visitors and certainly no tourists since the beginning of the civil war. Within Badakhshan, hotels and guesthouses catering to international tourists or researchers no longer existed. The only remaining hotel in Faizabad, which once accommodated tourists in the 1960s and 1970s, had become a residence

\(^{17}\) The term *jihad* is derived from the Arabic, which Shahrami translates as an “Islamic war of liberation” or a “holy war for the cause of Islam” (1984a:343; 1984b:25-30). In this context, *jihad* may be defined as “the ideological framework upon which the armed struggle in Afghanistan rests” (Shahrami 1984b:28).
for visiting commanders. Elsewhere, chaikhanas (teahouses) and serais (hostels) were other options, but were mostly frequented by traders for overnight stay and were therefore inappropriate for longer lodging. Fortunately, I was generously allowed to rent accommodation or was frequently invited to stay in some of the compounds of the international NGOs that were active in the province. In smaller towns and villages, I was generally offered local hospitality and was invited to stay in khushkhanas (guesthouses) that belonged either to a village or a village leader.

Fieldwork necessitated considerable flexibility in terms of living conditions, transportation and the ability to conduct research within time constraints, especially in the light of frequent natural disasters such as earthquakes and droughts, in addition to the constant threat of a take-over by the Taliban. It was almost inevitable that a European researcher would be initially regarded with suspicion, particularly given the uninvited presence of Soviet soldiers less than nine years earlier. While it was difficult to enter Badakhshan as an independent researcher, the fact that I was not a humanitarian worker provided me with additional privileges that otherwise eluded the staff of NGOs, such as the opportunity for unaccompanied travel within the parameters of the existing nightly curfew. This independent status often allowed a more effective rapport with informants. My meetings were not seen to be related to aid activities and for the most part were not regarded in an economic context. It was this combination of being 'somehow' connected with NGOs while working as an independent researcher that allowed me to gain the trust of communities and individuals.

Due to events well beyond my control, my research was interrupted in both 1998 and 1999 and I was forced to abandon fieldwork prematurely. In May 1998, while I was travelling between locations to conduct fieldwork in northwestern Badakhshan, I was near the epicentre of a massive earthquake registering 6.9 on the Richter scale which killed over 4000 people. This was the second major earthquake to have hit the same region within four months (see WFP 1998). Luckily, I was outdoors at the time since the vehicle in which I was travelling had been stranded due to a wash-out of the main thoroughfare - a dirt track - following heavy rain. Since all the passengers were waiting near the road and discussing how best to repair it so as to continue the journey, fortunately no-one was injured.

The devastation resulting from this earthquake, however, meant that I inevitably had to evaluate the importance of my research. At the time of the
earthquake’s impact, only a few aid workers were present in the province. Since all NGOs operating in Badakhshan were understaffed and unprepared for such a disaster, I temporarily became an emergency humanitarian worker, coordinating and organising relief operations. In this capacity, I later travelled to the epicentre, accompanying a donkey convoy with emergency food provisions, as due to adverse weather conditions and the inhospitability of the physical terrain, this area was not accessible by vehicle. This humanitarian engagement confirmed that my research on non-religious performances was not appropriate at that particular time. The people of Badakhshan were mourning and occupied with assisting survivors and the reconstruction of their villages. Understandably, they were not in a state to discuss sport or entertainment.

My second field trip in 1999 was problematic from the beginning. In response to the bombings of their embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in August 1998, the United States fired cruise missiles that same month into alleged terrorist camps belonging to the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, in southern Afghanistan. This military intervention meant that travel into Afghanistan for non-essential humanitarian staff — let alone independent researchers — became extremely difficult. Moreover, UN flights which previously had been funded by the European Union, had ceased to receive financial support from Donor Countries. The consequence was a skyrocketing in fares for non-UN and non-NGO travellers. After several unsuccessful attempts to re-enter Badakhshan by plane, I eventually flew from Pakistan to Tajikistan and managed then to travel overland from Dushanbe with the assistance of a number of international NGOs. Whilst this route has been primarily utilised to enable essential humanitarian aid to reach Afghanistan across the Amu Darya (Oxus River), it is not an official border-crossing and consequently necessitates many essential documents and permits which are obtainable only ‘for a price’ in Dushanbe. Unfortunately, this field trip was also cut short. In August 1999, the Taliban, having just overrun the Shomali plains, a Massoud stronghold north of Kabul, were making serious advances towards Badakhshan. The province was receiving an influx of internally displaced peoples, while many Badakhshis were making preparations to flee to Pakistan. On the advice of international staff and the UN, I was evacuated. As it later transpired, Ahmad Shah Massoud, the military strategist of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the main commander of the anti-Taliban United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (Jabha-e Muttahid-e Islami-e Melli bara-ye Nijat-e Afghanistan, henceforth United Front), ingeniously managed to defeat the
Taliban on this occasion. This small victory occurred while I was already in the safety of Pakistan.

Travel within Badakhshan would often consist of catching a ride with vehicles that belonged to NGOs. Occasionally, I would therefore coordinate my travel plans when I knew in advance that an organisation was travelling to a particular location. This was by far the easiest method since international NGOs could generally transit through the many checkpoints more easily. In contrast, local travellers were subject to vigorous checking. When I travelled to areas that were controlled by military commanders belonging to different and often opposing factions, such as commanders who were aligned with Rabbani rather than Massoud, I was required to present official travel documents that had been issued by the provincial governor (wali) or district governors (wali or alaqadar) so as to secure my passage through these military checkpoints.

Only limited motorised public transport was available within the province. The few operative jeeps belonged mainly to commanders and together with the only other irregular form of motorised public transport — travel on heavily laden trucks — reflected Badakhshan’s poor economic state and fragile infrastructure. These unpredictable conditions meant that walking with a loaded donkey or riding a horse was the most reliable form of transport. All roads were unsurfaced and thus prone to frequent wash-outs and landslides. Closures could last for anything from five hours to two weeks. When the province’s main trade arteries were impassable, especially the western road connecting Faizabad with neighbouring Takhar’s provincial capital Taloqan (see Maps 2 and 3), the usually poorly stocked bazaars were quickly depleted. I recall one occasion when wheat, an essential food item, was unavailable in Faizabad’s bazaar and local bakers were forced to close their businesses for three days.

As a result of the armed conflict, my field research was necessarily somewhat constrained and I needed to be able to adapt quickly to the demands of what were often volatile situations. Given the constant potential for emergency evacuations, it was essential that I stayed in frequent contact with the few NGOs in Badakhshan as these organisations were equipped with satellite communication systems. Armed disputes between warring commanders also occurred regularly, at times even within the vicinity of my residence. In one instance, I was unable to return to Faizabad as a result of fighting between feuding commanders belonging to different factions of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. During such times, I was mostly confined to my residence. On another occasion in 1998, I had planned to visit Bazgul Badakhshi, one of
Badakhshan’s most famous musicians and comedians, who then lived in impoverished circumstances in a remote village in the province. However, I was prevented from doing so by the outbreak of fighting in the region between two neighbouring and rival qawms (kinship associations), each of which was represented by a local commander, one of whom allegedly took Bazgul hostage during this domestic feud. In fact, on a daily basis, the constant presence of heavily armed soldiers loyal to their respective commanders meant that I had to be consistently careful in the conduct of my research, especially in light of the negative interpretations of non-religious practices espoused by some conservative Islamist leaders at that time. My first step therefore was usually to consult with the local staff of NGOs, who would subsequently introduce me to members of the community. With this understanding of the religio-political inclinations of the local commander and his soldiers, and exercising due caution, I found that local bazaars were excellent places to gather information on local performance traditions or in which to locate informants.

Interviews were conducted with my knowledge of Persian acquired at The Australian National University and sometimes with the assistance of the Afghan staff from NGOs who knew some English. Occasionally, members of Badakhshan’s elite, many of whom were tertiarily-educated, had a considerable grasp of English and were happy to converse in it. However, the topic of non-religious performances is polemical for many orthodox Muslims, particularly given the ultra-conservative interpretations of Islamic doctrines that prevailed in 1998 and 1999 when non-religious entertainment was severely restricted or at best tacitly banned in many areas of Badakhshan. The contentious status of entertainment practices in Afghanistan quickly became clear to me when informants did not respond to my questions. As a consequence, questions had to be phrased carefully and specific inquiries about cultural performances were situational and varied in nature. More usually, information was obtained circuitously. The starting point, especially when I was in the company of military commanders, government officials or religious and conservative locals, was usually the eliciting of general information on local culture (farhang-e Badakhshan). Once informants became known to me and a level of trust was established, it was often possible to discuss sport and entertainment practices such as music and dance. Nevertheless, the latter practices proved to be particularly controversial, with only liberal informants willing to comment on them and then often privately. Public acknowledgment of one’s approval of such non-religious practices could potentially be interpreted by other locals, who may have been aligned with a conservative political faction, as a sign of weakness or even immorality. Threats to report such reprehensible views or
practices may have been an effective means of extorting bribes, and if payment did not eventuate, the resultant reporting to religious and political authorities may have led to fines or, in the worst case, incarceration. In many respects, therefore, I learned most about the province – its history, cultures, political and religious emphases – and the manifold identities of its inhabitants through my experiences of inquiring about culture and my eventual recording of cultural events.

In these less than ‘ideal’ research circumstances which in themselves bore testimony to the tenuous endurance of the governance of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the precarious yet valued nature of Afghanistan’s cultural heritage, my somewhat restricted observations were undoubtedly conditioned by an extraordinary amount of qismat (luck).

Synopsis of Dissertation

Chapter Two introduces the complexities of culture and performance and details the problematical research in this diverse field. Cultural performances are described and elucidated not only as microcosms of society, but as forms of metacommentaries on social, political, economic, and religious concerns. I propose that this broader role of performance may be effectively addressed through the use of a Peircean-influenced semiotic framework which facilitates the explication of the meanings and relationships inherent in performance events. Further, the local and Islamic categories of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden) are introduced in terms of a continuum on which performance events in Islamic societies are situated.

Chapters Three, Four and Five establish the social, cultural, religious, and political context of Badakhshan. A thorough knowledge of this setting is fundamental to the analysis of cultural performances that follows in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Three provides an ethnography of the agrarian society of Badakhshan, describing the various ethnic groups that live in the multi-cultural and multi-sectarian province. Badakhshan’s social and political history is addressed in Chapter Four. After giving an historical overview of the province, the chapter outlines the emergence of political Islam within this region as well as in the larger context of Afghanistan. It becomes clear that while influential to varying degrees in the province since the mid-seventh century, Islam remains the most important cultural and political factor in contemporary Badakhshan. Chapter Five discusses the inherently polemical
nature of cultural performance in orthodox Islamic societies. Arguments concerning the legality of various types of performance are presented and the nexus between Sufism and performance, as well as issues of gender and ideas of appropriate bodily conduct are discussed. In addition, the two sectarian Islamic groups of the majority Sunnis and minority Ismailis in the province are described in detail since their divergent views on aesthetic practices are crucial to later analyses of the performance events recorded in Badakhshan. This chapter also gives an historical overview of the social role and religious interpretations of performances in Afghanistan from the early twentieth century with particular emphasis on the more recent escalation in orthodoxy and the associated interpretation of music and dance performances as ‘unlawful’.

Chapter Six describes and analyses a number of cultural practices that were observed as public performances during field research in 1998 and 1999. These religious, sporting and aesthetic performances are discussed in terms of their location on the continua of religious/non-religious, halal/haram, cultural practices. Since public religious practices were seen to be clearly legitimate, they continued to be performed without restrictions in Badakhshan. In comparison, non-religious practices were publicly performed only if they were deemed to be acceptable within the prevailing conservative interpretations of Hanafi Islam.\(^\text{18}\) Thus in stark contrast to the Taliban-held territories, the non-religious special events of nowruz (Persian New Year) and jeshen (Independence Day) were celebrated with equestrian and wrestling tournaments. The public performances of aesthetic practices, however, were much more controversial and, as a result, occurred only on two occasions during my research. In one location, a music performance accompanied the jeshen festival. In another, albeit more remote region, solo dances were performed by Ismailis during a public entertainment program. These public performances of non-religious sport and aesthetic practices were proudly patronised as Badakhshi heritage and in each case were clearly condoned by the ruling religio-political elite.

Chapter Seven complements the discussion of public performances by surveying cultural practices that took place in the more restricted semi-public and private domains. All of these performance events included music and dancing and were perceived by the ruling Sunni authorities to be ‘non-

\(^{18}\) Hanafi is one of the main Sunni schools of jurisprudence named after the great classical Islamic jurist Abu Hanifa who died in 767. In Afghanistan, as in most Sunni-influenced societies, Hanafi Islam is the major form of Islamic law.
religious' in nature and thus implicitly haram. These practices in particular were subject to historical shifts in political and religious ideologies. Significantly, and in comparison with religious performances and also recreational activities, non-religious practices were less clearly defined, more polysemous and generally more ambiguous. They were thus open to many possible interpretations. Indeed, while their themes tended to reflect aspects of the specific locality, ideas of the nation and religious influences, primarily those of Sufism and Ismailism, aesthetic performances also made socio-critical comments that in other contexts within Badakhshan's conservative society would have been clearly inappropriate and prone to harsh religious and political censorship.

Each case example in Chapters Six and Seven is accompanied by QuickTime movie files on accompanying CD ROMs.¹⁹

Chapter Eight concludes this thesis by reiterating the significant interplay of religion and politics in extant cultural practices in Badakhshan. During the era of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the Taliban, uncertainties about legitimate cultural heritage stemmed from a state of general confusion about the appropriateness of traditional Afghan practices in a conservative Islamic society. Yet both the contexts and the content of performances recorded in 1998 and 1999 testify to the diversity of ethnic, regional, religious, and political identities in Badakhshan. Given the factionalised nature of contemporary Afghanistan, cultural practices, both religious and non-religious, may therefore represent a positive means of nation-building by strengthening community relationships across sectarian, social and political divisions and rebuilding confidence in what constitutes Afghan cultural identity.

**Use of Pseudonyms**

The unpredictability of politics in Afghanistan renders the naming of informants problematic, making them potentially vulnerable in the event of a resurgence of orthodox Islam. None of my informants, for example, wanted to be known as having belonged to the Communist regime. As this thesis will elucidate, Afghanistan is a volatile country with harsh and difficult living

¹⁹ The CD ROMs are inserted into the back pocket of this thesis. Instructions on how to use QuickTime are provided in Appendix Five.
conditions. Retribution killings were not uncommon during the jihad against the Soviet-backed Communist government as well as during the early period of Islamic governance. While Afghanistan is now being reconstructed with international assistance, it remains a very conservative Muslim society and its immediate political future is thus impossible to predict.

While ideally I would prefer to quote sources for attribution, I have been compelled therefore, to use pseudonyms for all individuals and communities who have participated in this research, since genuine security for their lives cannot be guaranteed. Indeed, the identities of my informants were always "intricately situational" (Malkki 1995:3). It is essential that I safeguard the anonymity of my informants, who under adverse political conditions freely shared information and insights with me about practices that at the very least, were regarded as controversial, if not reprehensible. Hence, I will use pseudonyms for all persons with the exceptions of well-known political leaders such as President Burhanuddin Rabbani, and entertainers such as Bazgul Badakhshi, as well as regional commanders and performers who have since been assassinated. Real names of informants are used only if they were not living in Afghanistan at the time of my research or if they gave consent to being cited. Similarly, I have intentionally changed the names of towns and villages in which I conducted my fieldwork, with the exception of the provincial capital Faizabad. Consequently, original places names appear in the historical narrative and maps of Badakhshan, whereas pseudonyms are employed for towns and villages in which research was conducted.

*Notes on the Spelling of Arabic and Persian Words*

A precise system of transliteration for words of Arabic or Persian origin may be considered a scholarly task in its own right. I have therefore opted for a simplified system without diacritical marks to facilitate easier reading of the text. This transliteration system has been modified from the consonantal system used in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. The main aim has been to approximate the pronunciation for a large and general audience, while the expert should have no trouble identifying the exact pronunciations and spellings of the terms and names recorded.

The Arabic and Persian emphatic consonants of se, sin and sad are all transliterated as s. The transliterated letter h may refer to two separate Arabic/Persian letters he, while the letter t may represent the letters te and ta.
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(see Glossary). No distinctions are generally made between long (ā, ū, ī) and short vowels (ə, ū, ī). For example, a long a (ā), as in khane (house), and a short a, as in daf (tambourine), are both spelt with the same letter. When the letter he appears as an ending of a word as in khane, the h remains silent, thus rendering the term in Persian-speaking regions as e. In the Dari dialect, the Persian language spoken in Afghanistan, the ending is, however, commonly pronounced colloquially as a, as in khana. Occasionally the long a is actually pronounced o in Afghanistan as in the example of samovar instead of samavar (see Glossary).

The diphthong vowel ‘ow’ (as in the English ‘how’) has been rendered as aw, exemplified with the Arabic noun qawm (a kinship term), except in cases where a common transliterated form already exists in the academic literature. Exceptions in this thesis, for example, are the words for the Persian New Year (nowruz instead of nauruz) and April (saur instead of sawr). The other diphthong vowel “ay” (as in the English ‘pay’) is transliterated as ai and is shown with the example of the Persian word chai (see Glossary). The Arabic sign ain is represented without the opening inverted comma; the term Shi‘ite is thus transliterated as Shiite. The symbol hamza that is often transliterated as a closing inverted comma has also been omitted. The Qur’an is therefore spelt here as Quran. The Persian genitive construction (ezafē) appears as e as in maidan-e id (id grounds).

The Arabic letter waw has been mostly transliterated as u as in dutar (two­stinged lute), although o is occasionally also used as in kofta (a meat dish). The letter qav is transliterated as q and not as k, unless a common spelling in English has already been established such as in the spelling of the cities/provinces Kandahar, Kataghan or Kunduz, which technically speaking should be transliterated as Qandahar, Qataghan or Qunduz.

All foreign words that are not in common usage in the English language are italicised and are spelled as they appear in standard publications. The English translation of the initial appearance of a foreign term is provided in parentheses, set off by adjoining commas, or is listed in a footnote. Except at the beginning of a sentence, a footnote or in the title of a publication, all Arabic or Persian words are spelled in lower case. Only foreign names that are common in Western usage are spelled in upper case. For simplicity and unless otherwise marked, the plurals of foreign terms are mostly formed by adding an unitalised ‘s’ to the singular noun. In direct quotes, all attempts have been made to retain all original transliterations. Where Arabic or Persian words have
entered English usage or are widely recognised by a particular form, they are presented in the familiar form and are not italicised (such as Allah, Sura, Quran, Sharia, Imam, Caliph, Shah, Taliban). In most cases, a brief note appears in the main text, which is then repeated, expanded upon or summarised in the appended glossary (Appendix One). Arabic or Persian words that are important terms in the context of this thesis, as well as less common English words and acronyms appear in the glossary. In addition, a second appendix offers notes on the system of transliteration used for Persian and Arabic consonants and vowels (Appendix Two).
2

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences - literature, art, music ritual, life, death - and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation - migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation - makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of 'nation', 'peoples', or authentic 'folk' tradition, those embedded myths of culture's particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition (Bhabha 1994:172).

In all societies, performances occur as culturally situated everyday activities and/or special events. They engender meaning through "the sense of putting more into something (in a self-conscious or intentional way) than is absolutely necessary; of loading an act with meaning...of above all insisting on 'meaning to mean'" (Rostas 1998:90). In this chapter, I will be mainly concerned with delineating the nature and significance of performance and establishing a methodological framework for the later analysis of the performances of prayer,

1 It is, however, important to recognise that it is difficult to establish clear demarcations between such arbitrary constructs and that one category may easily merge into another. Daily activities may be thought of "as the unmarked background condition against which specific events are framed" (Lewis 1999:539), in contrast with extra-daily activities which are marked and framed.
sports, music, and dance — *id, buzkashi, musiqi,* \(^2\) and *raqs* — that arose as special events in the highly political and religious context of Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999.

Specific issues related to the interpretation of performance and culture are addressed in the first section of this chapter. The problematic nature of such analyses is seen to arise from a number of factors: culture is not a static and fixed structure, performances tend to be polysemous and bodies are situated in both physical and social contexts. The second section of this chapter proposes the integration of a number of theoretical models — primarily those of Peircean semiotics and phenomenology — as a means of addressing some of the dilemmas that beset the interpretation of cultural performances. Accordingly, in this thesis, performances are treated as classes of signs or in other words, as "physically manifested vehicles that bear culturally endowed meaning" (Parmentier 1987:11). The two categories of religious and non-religious performances that serve as critical points of distinction in Badakhshi society are discussed at length in the third section of this chapter. Given that the majority of performances surveyed in this thesis are non-religious in nature, this category is necessarily subdivided into recreational and aesthetic performances. Finally, the ancillary use of the methodologies of visual anthropology and to a lesser extent, Laban Movement Analysis is presented. I suggest that this eclectic interpretive approach is necessary to explicate the central tenet of this thesis that Badakhshan’s cultural performances are signs which not only reflect, but potentially comment on and engage with the socio-political circumstances of Badakhshan’s society at large.

*Culture and Performance*

Since the 1960s, a significant shift in anthropological investigation has occurred through the impact of the diverse fields of phenomenology, structuralism, structural linguistics, semiotics, and hermeneutics. Its central tenet of culture has ceased to be understood as a stable entity or set of static structures but rather, has come to encompass a multitudinous matrix of facets

\(^2\) I have chosen *musiqi* as the generic term for music that was understood by many of my often-urban educated informants in Badakhshan. It must be noted, however, that there are many words to denote music in Afghanistan, of which many are regional (for a discussion on the terminology of music in Afghanistan, see Sakata 1983:41-75). Some of the words may therefore have different meanings in various situations and contexts.
and associated complexities. As a consequence, although remaining “a salient concept around which meanings are mobilized” (Lock and Kaufert 1998:5), ‘culture’ has become difficult to define readily.

A useful approach is that espoused by E. Valentine Daniel (1996:200) who describes culture as emergent, dynamic and processual. While Thomas Eriksen defines culture as the “acquired, cognitive and symbolic aspects of existence” for the members of a society (1995:9), it is important to recognise the role of practice and creativity in culture. In line with this emphasis, Jean and John Comaroff (1991:22) refer to culture as:

the space of signifying practice, the semantic ground on which human beings seek to construct and represent themselves and others – and, hence, society and history. As this suggests, [culture] is not simply a pot of messages, a repertoire of signs to be flashed across a neutral mental screen. It has form as well as content; is born in action as well as thought; is a product of human creativity as well as mimesis; and, above all, is empowered. But it is not all empowered in the same way, all of the time.

Similarly, Randy Martin proposes that culture “is the principle of association present in all forms, sites and expressions of social practice, not simply a particular type of practice” (1998:116). Indeed, he further posits that culture may be understood as “what moves people in the workplace and at home, what drives the experience of love and death” and thus has the potential to inspire “social movements and political parties” (Martin 1998:116). Homi Bhabha (1994:175) eloquently describes these multi-dimensional and multivalent qualities as rendering culture

as much an uncomfortable, disturbing practice of survival and supplementarity - between art and politics, past and present, the public and the private - as its resplendent being is a moment of pleasure, enlightenment or liberation.

Clifford Geertz (1973) and his semiotic schema of cultures as systems of symbols, continue to be of primary influence in contemporary conceptualisations of culture. His version of the text metaphor is frequently adopted as a theoretical framework for cultural studies since it draws out “dichotomies between cultural and biological/genetic, and between public and private sources of information” (Csordas 1994:12). Influenced by Max Weber, Geertz describes culture as “webs of significance” (1973:5). His interpretive ethnography facilitates the deciphering of multiple, layered networks of meaning through a diverse range of symbolic forms including language, actions and conceptions (see Marcus and Fischer 1999:29). All aspects of social life, “from mythology to subsistence practices” are thus sources of insight into cultural phenomena (Ness 1992:230). Daniel, however, disagrees with Geertz’s approach to culture as a system of symbols and meanings.
Instead, his own pragmatic semiotic method conceptualises culture as a complex pattern of *signs*; culture is a creative and inherently communicative phenomenon that is manifested when public and private aspects of human experience become "mutually immanent" in social action (Daniel 1984:13). I believe that Daniel’s approach to culture is extremely pertinent to the analysis of cultural performances in Afghanistan and it will therefore be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In recent years, a burgeoning of publications in the field of performance studies has led to the development of new ethnographic and inter-cultural perspectives on cultural events and practices. Emerging from feminist, linguistic, literary, and anthropological theories, these significant developments have become a major critical discourse in the humanities. Increasingly, there has been a shift in emphasis away from the primacy of linguistic and textual interpretations of culture and towards a greater recognition of the role of the body. Culture is thus not only dynamic, but embodied; members of communities interact with one another and through enacting, blending, borrowing, and reinventing, continue to (re)develop meaningful cultural practices with which they then identify.

This central role of performance events in culture and ‘cultural heritage’ is not only being recognised by academic scholars, but also more recently, by international organisations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and ICOMOS (International Council of Monument and Sites). These influential organisations have created their own terminology for culturally situated practices, which are encapsulated by the categories of ‘intangible cultural heritage’ and ‘intangible cultural property’ (for example see UNESCO 2000). The concept of tangible properties such as material objects, architecture, literature, handicrafts, and the fine and applied arts, is generally relatively familiar to most people, at least in part due to their

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3 In this discussion, the polysemous term ‘heritage’ shall be taken as pertaining to all accumulated cultural [aesthetic and] artistic productivity...whether produced in the past or currently...which contributes to the effective functioning of society or to the favoured national [or ethnic/territorial] image, and which is thereby worthy of note or preservation for the enjoyment of this or future generations (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996:2).

4 Cultural property is understood here as in Article 1 of the UNESCO Cultural Property Convention 1970, where it is defined as “property, which, on religious or secular grounds, is specifically designated by each state as being of importance for archaeology, prehistory, literature, art or science” and as constituted by several specific categories (quoted in Janke 1998:316).
Theoretical Framework and Methodology

ready accessibility via archives, exhibitions, visits to historic sites, or through media coverage. In comparison, the significance of performed cultural heritage has been relatively ignored. Clearly, the creation of the term ‘intangible’ represents a positive attempt to reverse this imbalance of cultural heritage agendas.

The concept of intangible practice is also a useful tool in the context of this thesis as it provides a means of collectively describing all cultural performances through the use of a single category, regardless of whether the practices are artistic, aesthetic, religious, or non-religious in nature. Yet it is important to note that this dichotomisation of cultural heritage into ‘intangible’ and ‘tangible’ properties may be somewhat problematic (see Daes 1993).\(^5\) From a phenomenological perspective, this binary distinction may potentially detract from the tangibility of intangible practices and, concomitantly, the intangibility of tangible events.\(^6\) As will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, the intangible qualities of music and oral poetry may in some instances be more durable than their tangible counterparts. The ‘tangible’ Buddha statues in Bamiyan, central Afghanistan, for example, did not survive the Taliban regime’s strict edicts on non-Islamic monuments and were destroyed on 10 March 2001 (UNESCO 2001). In contrast, the performative practices of sport, music and dance publicly re-surfaced in November 2001, following the fall of Kabul to the United Front who in their role as a caretaker force, immediately reintroduced music on national radio broadcasts.

\(^5\) In indigenous and many non-Western societies, tangible and intangible aspects of culture are often closely linked. As Erica Irene Daes (1993:39) argues all of the aspects of heritage are interrelated and cannot be separated from the traditional territory of the people concerned. What tangible and intangible items constitute the heritage of a particular indigenous people must be decided by the people themselves.

For example, many practices of some Australian Aboriginal groups such as the male initiation ceremonies incorporate a combination of tangible and intangible traditions. Terri Janke (1998:80) therefore argues that Australian indigenous heritage is “an holistic approach where traditions are embodied in songs, stories and designs as well as in land and the environment - the intangible interlinked with the tangible.”

\(^6\) An intangible event may even be viewed as being closely associated with the tangible issues of feeling and emotion. Since intangible events are ‘felt’ through the body, they may be thought to be inextricably linked with the tangible.
Performance

Having touched upon some of the conceptual issues related to the study of culture and cultural heritage, I will now move to the discussion of performance. Performance events are common to all societies. As forms of embodied heritage, cultural performances may be understood to encompass sacred and profane practices and events, language and oral history, and particular beliefs, values, and knowledge. They are often expressed as linguistic (songs, storytelling), extra-linguistic (sport, dance, gestures, physical movements) or religious traditions (rituals such as prayer) that hold significant meaning for a community and are integral to its identity. These complex and polysemous practices thus hold aesthetic, historic, scientific, and/or social value for past, present and future generations. In this context, both professional and amateur performers may be understood as informants of social values and cultural knowledge. Concomitant with their communication of culturally significant knowledge and practices to other members of society, they not only reflect, but also create a community’s cultural identity.

The category of performance is generally understood by researchers in the humanities as encompassing a diversity of expressive practices ranging from sacred activities such as rituals, to profane recreational and entertainment events like sport, theatre, dance, and music (see Beeman 1993; Reinelt 1992). While the methodology of this analysis draws on a Peircean-influenced phenomenological semiotics, this is not to deny the influence of a number of anthropological approaches in shaping my approach to performance, particularly in terms of their illumination of the broader role and connections of performance events. Both Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, pioneers in interpretive anthropology and performance studies respectively, have alluded to the importance of “cultural expressions and performances [as]...not mere reflections of society but...[as] metacommentaries on society” (Bruner 1986:23). Edward Bruner (1986:11) also suggests that if an expressive element

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7 Lowell Lewis refers to extra-linguistic signs as proto-linguistic signs since the signs may or may not come into linguistic conceptualisation and, therefore, may remain at a movement or sound level of understanding without being expressed in language (Personal communication, Sydney, 2001).

8 Practitioners of culturally significant performances have been awarded the status of “Living Human Treasures” by UNESCO (2000). These cultural bearers are persons who embody, who have in the very highest degree, the skills and techniques necessary for the production of selected aspects of the cultural life of a people and the continued existence of their material cultural heritage (UNESCO 2000).
The work of Victor Turner, however, is especially relevant to this study of the nexus between culture, politics and religion. Turner (1986a:22, 84) regards performances as examples of human social processes that not only reflect the social system like a microcosm, but which at the same time, are reciprocal and reflexive, hence potentially critical of the social life from which they arise. A performance therefore can be seen as a commentary on social conditions (see Turner 1990:17). In Turner’s benchmark research on the practices of ‘play’ and ‘drama’, the genre of performance and its performers are affected by liminal modalities. Borrowed from Arnold van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage* (1960), the term ‘liminality’ subsequently became one of Turner’s key concepts to describe experience, primarily during ritual. In fact, this concept has remained influential in contemporary performance studies (such as Kapferer 1983; Lewis 1992; Schechner 1985).

Turner (1974:85) argues that liminal events “tend to be collective, concerned with calendrical, biological, social-structural rhythms or with crises in social processes”. They are thus exemplified by the rituals of small-scale agrarian and often indigenous societies, but may also encompass “frameworks seen as grounded in transcendental, fundamental, or ‘ultimate concerns’” (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:200). Turner describes a liminal practice as reflecting a “no-man’s-land betwixt and between the structural past and the structural future” (1986b:41), a “fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities” (1990:12). Likewise, Roach (1992:13) formulates the concept of liminality as a “state or process of living on the margins, of crossing the boundaries, of literally being at the ‘threshold’ of culture’s inside/outside”. Liminal performances which are obligatory to a society and are often secluded from everyday practices, such as a religious festival or the rite of passage of a wedding, stand in contrast to voluntary ‘liminoid’, or ritual-like, activities. While tending to originate from a liminal phenomenon, liminoid practices often foster the cohesiveness of social systems; they are manifest in the arts and leisure pursuits of predominantly industrialised societies, but at the same time may express some form of social critique (see Turner 1974:85-86).10

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9 ‘Liminality’ stems from the Latin noun *limen* (threshold), a term that was used by van Gennep in the second of his three stages in rites of passage (Turner 1986b:41).

10 As Lewis (1993:198) argues, liminoid practices “such as theatre, sports, concerts, festivals...may have some elements of ritual, especially the basic sequence, but usually do not
While the distinction between liminal and liminoid is often seen to be rather arbitrary and difficult to clarify, liminal practices tend to involve symbols with common intellectual and emotional meaning for all members of a group. In comparison, "liminoid phenomena tend to be more idiosyncratic, quirky, to be generated by specific named individuals and in particular groups" (Turner 1974:85).

The variety of genres within the category of performance generally have a number of common features: a sequence of limited duration, a demarcated beginning and end, intensity, the participation of performers and an audience, a venue, and an occasion to perform that is commonly set apart from the ordinary routines of life. Cowan (1990:4) describes a performance as a "conceptually 'bounded' sphere of interaction...[where] individuals publicly present themselves...and are evaluated by others". Yet the role of the audience's identity and participation frequently passes unacknowledged, possibly because, like the performance activity itself, it is not easily interpreted. Remarking on Herbert Blau's work *The Audience* (1990), Martin (1997:336) postulates that a performance is "as a thing-in-itself, for itself", whereby the audience may be regarded as a receiver, "the mirror of a semiosis of performance", or as being contained by the intention of the performance, "the performative agency". An audience may thus serve as "an object of representation" that is best conceptualised through the notion of participation as it "assumes the internal perspective of the performance event" (Martin 1998:38). The importance of the audience rests with its communicative role since it is "not only part of the event's reason for being but also its means of becoming" (Martin 1998:38). In fact, the audience's identity comes into existence only as the performer, the medium of signification, creates the event.

In the search for an effective method of conceptualising cultural performances, the notion of 'framing', first developed by Gregory Bateson (1972:184-193), is particularly useful. Within Bateson's (1972:186) model, a frame is a psychological concept that delimits meaningful actions. Moreover, the frame is meta-communicative, that is it "communicates about communication" (Cowan 1990:19). For example, the framing of a particular performance event that takes place in a particular space and time, may indicate 'this is wrestling'.

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11 In order to accommodate a more dynamic model for the frame's apparently static and impermeable nature, other terms such as the metaphor of a flexible, "porous net" have been proposed (Schechner 1993:41).
Erving Goffman (1958; 1974) expands Bateson’s idea of ‘framing’ and applies it more generally, wherein the social interactions of participants may be used to understand the self and others through the use of frameworks of interpretations. Like Goffman, Turner (1986a:140) utilises the metaphor of theatre to explain his theories and also elaborates upon the concept of ‘framing’:

[T]o frame is to discriminate a sector of sociocultural action from the general ongoing process of a community's life. It is often reflexive, in that, to “frame,” a group must cut out a piece of itself for inspection (and retrospection).

He suggests that such inspection is enabled by the demarcation of a performance space and time where “images and symbols of what has been sectioned off can be ‘relived,’ scrutinized, assessed, revalued, and, if need be, remodelled and rearranged” (Turner 1986a:140). The cultural performances in Badakhshan which are the focus of this thesis, were clearly set apart and differentiated from quotidian activities by ‘frame-markers’ including the explicit naming of events, the establishment of distinct boundaries between these events and the everyday, and/or such other means as the nature of the setting or the clothing worn by participants.12

Reminiscent of Turner’s concept of performances as microcosms of the social system, Geertz (1973:30) describes performances as “symbolic dimension[s] of social action” through which significant components of a culture can be elucidated. In his now classic work on the Balinese cockfight, Geertz elicits meaning through the operation of symbolic dramatisation. As the performance’s interpreter, he brilliantly reads the cockfight as a text in a contextual world and comes to understand its cultural meaning (see Clifford 1988:40). By employing a ‘thick description’ of ordinary Balinese daily life, Geertz illuminates an “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols” (1973:89) and interprets the cockfight as a “dramatization of status concerns” (1973:437). The performance acts like a synecdoche,13 in which the Balinese cockfight comes to represent a significant locus of Balinese culture.

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12 Even though the daily activity of preparing food may be interpreted as a performance, on a continuum of least special to most special events, the washing up for example does not rate as a special activity since it usually neither involves a performative action nor an audience. For it to serve as a special event, it would require a clear and intentional marking to break its routine and to distinguish it from habitual engagement.

13 A figure of speech in which a part is named but the whole is understood or the whole is named but a part is understood.
The larger role of performance is also emphasised by the ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1985:64-65) who defines performances such as dance, music and ritual as

modes of human communication [that] on a continuum from the nonverbal to the verbal...can express ideas of other spheres of human activity: social, political, economic, and religious activities.

Through movement, a performance may demarcate such overarching binary categories as ordinary/special, sacred/profane or private/public, and thereby illuminate people’s connections to their social world and cultural environment. While the binary categories of sacred/profane and private/public will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven, it is nevertheless important to emphasise here that performance events actually occur on continua ‘in between’ these dichotomised poles (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:200, 209). For example, on a continuum of “specially marked performative frameworks” and degrees of participation, rituals may be understood as “the most special, the most important, the most essential...[since] on their performance depends the survival of cultural systems as recognisable forms, as models of and models for action and identity” (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:208). These events generally evince significant consensus among the participants in terms of belief and practice (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:209), and may thus be understood as liminal practices. In contrast, events that are “less crucial and more optional” (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:208) or, in other words, more entertaining and less transformative (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:209), may be regarded as ritual-like or liminoid performances.

Furthermore, the genres of performance events such as ritual, music, dance, and sport need to be differentiated from each other, largely because they are distinguished in practice by the people of Badakhshan themselves. For example, the performance category of ceremony — a special event — is understood in Badakhshan as consisting of several sub-categories such as commemorative events (such as the Persian New Year) and social (such as a wedding) and religious ritual practices (such as id). Games are a performance category with indeterminate boundaries, constituting an integral part of the

\[^{14}\text{Id, an Arabic noun, literally means festival. Two major id's are celebrated in the Muslim calendar id-e ramazan (The Feast of the End of Ramadan) and id-e qurban (The Feast of Sacrifice). See Chapter Five as well as Appendix One for further details.}\]
performance culture of many societies and incorporating activities such as sport (for example, wrestling) and play (for example, kite-flying). In this thesis, I suggest that cultural performances represent significant forms of personal and collective communication. Culture itself may be seen to be a performance and more specifically a dynamic and processual practice. As a consequence, the meanings and effects that arise from cultural performances are not necessarily predetermined by what has gone before, but rather, performances have the ability to create new understandings and effects. Building on this concept of performance as a mode of cultural practice which is both delineated and understood through the act of 'framing', in Chapters Six and Seven I will seek to unravel the social and political themes inherent in the cultural performances of Badakhshan. In so doing, I shall draw upon Clifford Geertz’s notion of ‘native exegesis’, firstly deferring to local categories and representations of cultural practices “from the native’s point of view” (Geertz 1976:222), before then critically engaging with these interpretations. I am aware, however, that my own life experiences and inherent biases preclude me from experiencing “the native’s point of view directly, the best...[I] can do is learn as much as possible about what the natives perceive ‘with’—the full inventory of forms, concepts, and meanings that inform their version of reality” (Basso and Selby 1976:8). This brings us to the place of the body in performance and performance studies.

The Body in Culture

There is no such thing as ‘the human body’: there are many kinds of body, which are fashioned by the different environments and expectations that societies have on their members’ bodies (Blacking 1985:66).

The body is clearly the medium of performative expression wherein “something that was ‘inside’ surfaces on the ‘outside’ and becomes noticeable” (Joas 1996 (1992):75). Culture and its signs of habit are intricately linked with bodily experiences and the creation of identity. In fact, ‘the body’ will have

15 Brazilian capoeira, a multi-dimensional performance comprising martial arts, movement, game, sport and song, provides an excellent example of an embodied practice that interweaves many aspects of the categories mentioned here (see Lewis 1992).
different meanings in different societies, “so that the very category body might be problematic for understanding a certain cultural system” (Lewis 1992:225). What makes the study of embodiment complex and often leads to definitional dilemmas is the body’s capacity to function in two respects: “having” a biological entity and “being” a social and philosophical construct (Lock 1993:136). This dilemma may contribute to the controversial positioning of the body in many societies including those dominated by Euro-American cultures in which the ‘body’ tends to remain “a repressed element” (Benthall 1976:92). Chapter Five will elaborate on the place of the body in the particular context of Islamic cultures. For the moment, however, this discussion will focus on contemporary sociological and anthropological theories of embodiment.

Recent theoretical movements in the humanities have clearly deconstructed the Cartesian mind/body paradigm and have highlighted the mutual interpenetration of the physical and the social. Mary Douglas (1966) points out in her major work Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo that ‘the body’ operates “as a symbol of society across cultures, and the rituals, rules, and boundaries concerning bodily behavior can be understood as the functioning of social rules and hierarchies” (Wolff 1997:83). In Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology (1970), she then provides insights into one of her primary concerns: the binary of ‘the social body’ and ‘the physical body’. Douglas, influenced by Marcel Mauss’ landmark essay Les Techniques du Corps (1935), proposes that ‘the physical body’ is a microcosmic reflection of society (Douglas 1970:70). She further stresses that

the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society (Douglas 1970:65).

This idea is reminiscent of Mauss’ original notion of the ‘habitus’ in which he proposes that “bodily control is an expression of social control” (Strathern 1996:18). Hence, bodily techniques “are not necessarily consciously taught; rather, they are shaped by and express the ‘habitus’” (Cowan 1990:22). It is

16 Bourdieu (1990:56) defines habitus as

embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted, and acting, which functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world.

The concept of habitus may also be understood as
The resistance to change implicit in this social inscription of the body contrasts with the more flexible and dynamic concept of 'habit' proposed by the semiotist Charles Sanders Peirce. However, the concept of the 'habitus' is well used by Sally Ann Ness. She describes the body as an "imagined reservoir" of purposeful instances, which she compares to "a human being's habitus or lifeway, a reservoir of memory, whose depth and surface may be grasped in its full significance perhaps only via extraordinary, 'metafunctional' practices" (Ness:10). The act of performance, therefore, may provide direct insights into the nature and meaning of both the physical and the social body.

Culture is inscribed in bodily experiences. The grounding of knowledge in the immediate, concrete and sensory lifeworld, the world of lived experience, is the methodology of phenomenology, a twentieth century philosophical movement. Joas (1996 (1992):181) proposes that "the basis of all experience is not just corporeality but the interrelatedness of our experience of our bodies to others' bodies". The body serves the role of "being-in-the-world" (Csordas 1994:12) whereby embodiment, the main tenet of phenomenology, reflects "the concrete, the here-and-now-presence of people to one another, and the complement of senses and feelings through which they communicate with one another". (Strathern 1996:2). Cultural performances are transient experiences executed through the body which tend to be associated with culturally significant, socially constituted and historically specific attitudes. Within and across cultures, bodily movement not only marks gender, age, illness, or health, but also various class, ethnic and national identities as well as biological and cultural characteristics (see Desmond 1998:156). Moreover, the cultural systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules (Bourdieu 1977:72).

Bourdieu's "cultivated dispositions" become "inscribed in the body schema and in the schemes of thought" (1977:15). The idea of disposition has a special meaning in Bourdieu's discussion of habitus, designating "the result of an organizing action;...it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body), and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination" (1977:214).

Peirce's concept of 'habit' has a wider meaning than its colloquial use and may be understood as repetitions with creative variation (see Peirce in Buchler 1955:277-280), allowing for both continuity and change in accordance with the demands of a particular situation (see also Appendix Three). Peirce's semiotic and phenomenological theories will be discussed in more detail below.

The theories were developed by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger and later refined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre.
practices of performance, as grounded in the lived body, provide the performer with a sense of kinaesthesis, that is, an experience of his or her phenomenal body, during the movements of prayer, sport or dance. Both body and self are thus central to the ‘lived’ experiences of a performance.

The study of embodied practices is also greatly reliant upon indigenous understandings (see Jackson 1983:339). Indeed, cultural performances implicitly emphasise doing rather than saying (see Jackson 1983:339). Lowell Lewis (1993:207-208) suggests that

what people do at such [performance] events, whether they stand, sit, or dance, whether they sing along or clap after, is at least as important, and often more so, than what they say about how they felt, although both are indicators.

Discussions of often ambiguous or contentious issues such as sexuality and gender may also be problematic in cross-cultural settings as was certainly my experience in the mostly agrarian and extremely conservative Islamic context of Badakhshan. In such situations, sexuality may be incorporated in “a culturally specific complex of ideas, feelings, and practices” that are anchored and made manifest in performance (Cowan 1990:4). In fact, performances such as dance and sport may represent media through which a gendered or another identity is ‘put on’, inscribed on the body and expressed. The body is thus “both that which constitutes meaning and that through which meaning is performed or enacted” (Butler 1988:521). Having established that bodily experiences are associated not merely with the biological, but with social and cultural agendas, the next section explicitly addresses their relationship to political structures.

Politics and Culture

Grounded in its respective social context, each cultural performance is inherently linked to a political structure and may reflect social and territorial boundaries as well as ethnic and kinship organisation. As will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five, politics in Afghanistan is permeated by religion as well as by traditional and/or formal methods of governance; problems of social order tend to reflect conflicts between and within groups and sub-groups. During the Taliban era in particular, social and cultural life became infused

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19 This is not to deny the fluid and porous nature of social and territorial boundaries and the plasticity of ethnic identity.
with political agendas. Since their Religious Police were at liberty to intervene in all aspects of life within both public and private domains, any ‘unIslamic’ cultural performance that occurred during this period had the potential of being interpreted as a political and/or subversive act.

Michel Foucault describes how relations of power “permeate, characterise and constitute the social body” (Foucault and Gordon 1980:93) and are enacted or inscribed upon the physical body. Nicos Poulantzas (1978:29) expounds these power relationships primarily in terms of domination and in the shaping of subjects:

the State is always rooted in its physical constraint, manipulation and consumption of bodies ... through institutions which actualize bodily constraint and the permanent threat of mutilation (prison, army, police, and so on); and through a bodily order which both institutes and manages bodies by bending and moulding them into shape and inserting them in the various institutions and apparatuses.

In all political systems, members of a society are subjected to both overt and covert forms of social control (see Martin 1998: 177). However, it is essential to recognise “peoples’ responses to having their bodies appropriated and designated as sites of inscription” (Peteet 1994:33). Indeed, the fact that outlawed performances persisted in Afghanistan during two and a half decades of civil war and more recently under the rule of orthodox Islamic authorities, clearly counters any notion of the dominated, docile body. The continued cultural practice of dance in mostly clandestine circumstances particularly exemplifies the connection between performance and politics whereby a sensuous performance is simultaneously a social or political act.

Certainly, the nature, value and legitimacy of prevailing symbols are commonly nominated by the dominant and/or influential people in that society (see Bourdieu 1984). This has undoubtedly been the case in Afghanistan where orthodox religio-political leaders have sanctioned particular religious symbols such as the azan (the call to prayer) or the wearing of certain types of caps and turbans. Symbols may thus be underscored with political agendas, providing “a powerful way in which people’s social dependence can be expressed” or fostered (Kertzer 1988:9). In Badakhshan, as is common throughout Afghanistan, members of rural communities are in a mutually dependent relationship with their leaders (that of a patron-client relationship). On the one

An ideal-type definition of the state is implied here (see Migdal 1988:19), bearing in mind that not all political territories are endowed with a state. Afghanistan during the Taliban era is such an example.
hand, a patron may depend “for his own power and status on the number of ‘clients’” whereas on the other, the clients rely on his protection (Kertzer 1988:31).

A performance may serve therefore as a context in which the powerful and the powerless interact. It is also potentially an ideal opportunity to communicate and exchange political agendas. For those who have no other means of engaging politically, a performance may even be “a means...to take power,...to have a political influence [and] ...to challenge the position of the elite” (Kertzer 1988:144). This political role of cultural practice is aptly described by the political scientist James Scott (1990:157) who states that “subordinate groups might wish to find ways of expressing dissonant views through their cultural life...as a riposte to an official culture that is almost invariably demeaning”. A performance may thus be understood to contain a “hidden transcript” in which the subordinate performer “presses against and tests the limits of what may be safely ventured in terms of a reply to the public transcript of deference and conformity” (Scott 1990:164-165). Related to this, the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1979:23) suggests that cultural performances are a means of “reversing the goals and rules of everyday life”. For these reasons, in times of political upheaval and repression as the people of Afghanistan have experienced over the last two decades,

...arts and sports increase in value. The more confining the official view of reality, the more feverishly people turn to activities where assimilation can still prevail over accommodation, where one still feels some control over the shape of the world he or she inhabits (Csikszentmihalyi 1979:23).21

Any creative use of physical movement thus involves an underlying system of processes that produces and/or reflects “both the system and the product, and [thereby] the socio-political context” (Kaeppler 2001). When dance and music, for example, are seen to express cognitive, emotional and kinaesthetic dimensions that create “excitement, fear, and pleasure for performers and observers” (Hanna 1979:146-147), these cultural practices may also be understood to potentially communicate political thought and to influence political outcomes. Using dance as an example, Cowan (1990:20) eloquently summarises the political potential of performance:

Just as dance is used metaphorically to talk about the ambiguities of social action and experience in everyday life, so is talk about actual dancing preoccupied with these same ambiguities. Dance is associated with control by others (“being danced”) but

21 Jazz in Nazi Germany and rock music in the Soviet Union would have performed similar functions.
also with freedom; suffering but also release; sociability but also competition; display but also exposure; sensuality but also the potential for loss of status; power but also vulnerability; expressions of individuality but also of social accountability.

The politicisation of performance therefore most commonly reflects the representation and perception of the body in a particular society. However, an outcry about dance, for example, may not necessarily be due to the actual dancing or related to controversy about the body itself, but rather may be related to activities that accompany dance such as the consumption of alcohol or drugs, violence and sex (McRobbie 1997:212). Nevertheless, the ‘dancing body’ does tend to be marginalised in Judeo-Christian and Islamic cultures; dance often appears in these contexts as inherently subversive (Wolff 1997:98). Whilst in Islamic societies, dance is rarely mentioned, “the marginality of dance itself as an art form [even] in the West” is made evident when compared to “orchestral music, opera, film, and literature” (Wolff 1997:98). Martin (1998:6) succinctly elucidates the way in which dance, and thus performance, is embedded in and expresses its social and political context:

dancing cannot, by itself, cause change in other social arenas, but beyond the scene of its performance. Nevertheless, what is situated in the world, what people contest in myriad forms, can also be found in dance. More pointedly, dance displays, in the very ways that bodies are placed in motion, traces of the forces of contestation that can be found in society at large.

Social and cultural elements are not inscribed on the body, but transmitted through it with the result that power is generated (Martin 1998:1). Consequently, a dance performance may express “all the intensity of an emergency, yet one that is invariably survived”; it may generate “a sense of being in the midst of a crisis, a break, a rupture, even a loss” (Martin 1998:1). Following on from this idea, seemingly minor mobilisations of life, such as the dance performances of the Ismaili, an ethnic and sectarian minority in Badakhshan, “may reveal more about the weak linkages or mediations that allow our sensibilities to relate to one another within the body politic than may the ways in which we are accustomed to perceiving and evaluating politics” (Martin 1998:182). The analysis of performance in later chapters will also demonstrate the political role of sport in Afghanistan, both during the time of my research, and during the former Soviet era when sporting success was explicitly viewed as a marker of the superiority of their system. Moreover, in times of social and political conflict in Afghanistan, cultural practices have

22 In the case of East Germany, this drive to succeed in sport went even so far as to foster a drug culture.
served to unite members of communities, possibly even "counteracting the divisive tendencies that plague[d] their daily social life" (Kertzer 1988:63). Indeed, the performance of music, dance and sport may function to "define more sharply the already established boundaries of moral and political communities; to assist in the creation of new social identities; to give physical expression to certain social values; [and] to serve as potentially contested space by opposed groups" (MacClancy 1996:7).

I will now turn to the frameworks of semiotics and phenomenology which I suggest effectively facilitate analysis of the socio-political meanings and connections that are communicated by both linguistic and extra-linguistic means through embodied performances.

**A Semiotic Framework for an Interpretation of Cultural Performances**

During the 1960s and 1970s, anthropology's preoccupation with culture as systems of symbols and meanings led to the emergence of a field that became known as semiotics (see Singer 1978:202). This field concerned itself with the study of contemporary life as systems of signs, and with the deciphering of cultural materials (Marcus and Fischer 1999:114). Within this framework, cultural processes include "all patterned communication in all modalities [and] all non-linguistic aspects of communication" (Singer 1978:212). Two principal strands of semiotics were developed during the second half of the nineteenth century: the semiotic model of the American logician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and the semiology of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). These theorists regarded the structure of language as critical to understanding the structure of any sign system (see Reinelt 1992:110).

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23 Peirce defines a sign as "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign" (1931-1958:2.228). In a Saussurian definition, a sign is interpreted as "everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else" (Payne 1996:497). It can be "something that stands for something else,...the relation between something and something else, or the perception (or misperception) of a relation between something and something else" (Payne 1996:500).
Both ‘semiotics’ and ‘semiology’ are general theories of all types of sign systems that utilise relational and structural schema. As a consequence, these terms are often used interchangeably, yet it must be noted that they have significantly different subject matter and methodologies. One of the main differences is that semiology is language-centred and uses a framework of the dyadic oppositions of signifier/signified, whereas a semiotic model is broader, concerned with the process of communication of all types of signs, even extra-linguistic signs such as bodily movements and sound (see Singer 1978:215-216). A Peircean semiosis is thus more appropriate to the nature and purpose of this analysis and will underpin the explication of the immediate and broader meanings, relationships and effects of performances (signs) in later chapters even though this terminology will for the most part not be used explicitly. For these reasons, Peirce’s concepts will be discussed here in detail.

![Peirce's triadic semiotic process](adapted from Daniel 1984:19).

Peirce defines the nature of signs and sign processes in the relational terms of an irreducible triadic relation of sign-object-interpretant (see Figure 1). This analytical vocabulary is particularly useful in the cross-cultural analysis of performance events. In later chapters, where relevant, cultural practices in Afghanistan will be discussed in terms of the relationships between the performance (sign), what the performance stands for (object), and the effect it

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24 Peirce’s exact term for his semiotic phenomenology is ‘semeiosis’ in order to emphasise the noun’s etymological origin from the Greek word *semeion* which he translates as sign. In this thesis, however, I will use the more commonly applied ‘semiosis’ (see Daniel 1996:213n3).
creates for the observer or performer (interpretant). The trichotomous semiotic concepts of sign, object, and interpretant permit the calculation of "many critical dimensions of 'signs in society'" (Parmentier 1994:xiv).\(^{25}\) Peirce’s triadic structure of a semiotic process is always connected with its three basic correlates. In this schema, the relationship between a sign and the object may occur in three ways.

Firstly, a sign “is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (Peirce 1931-1958:2.228).\(^{26}\) Secondly, its object can be understood as the “‘something else,’ or entity, stood for by the sign, be it in an abstract concept or a concrete object” (Turino 1999:222). The meaning of objects, be they words and concepts as well as “concrete or abstract things, individual behaviours, and social facts” (Nattiez 1990:9) is astutely defined by the music theorist Jean Jacques Nattiez (1990:9), a pioneer in ‘musical semiology’:

An object of any kind takes on meaning for an individual apprehending that object, as soon as that individual places the object in relation to areas of his lived experience—that is, in relation to a collection of other objects that belong to his or her experience of the world.

He further argues that “the meaning of an object exists not only for the person who receives it, but also for its producer” (Nattiez 1990:9). Thirdly, the interpretant can be understood as “the effect created by bringing the sign and object together in the mind of the perceiver” (Turino 1999:222). The interpretant is therefore the “translation, explanation, meaning, or conceptualization of the sign-object relation in a subsequent sign representing the same object” (Parmentier 1994:5). Further, the interpretant is associated with the “effect the sign has in/on the observer, including feeling and sensations, as well as ideas articulated and processed in language” (Turino 1999:223).

The methodology of this thesis draws particularly on Peirce’s second trichotomy and its classification of iconic, indexical and symbolic signs. Within this model, an icon may be understood as a sign that resembles its

\(^{25}\) In order to conceptualise various relationships between these three basic components of his semiotic triad, Peirce developed three trichotomies (see also Glossary of Peircean terms, Appendix Three).

\(^{26}\) I will apply the standard convention of citing from The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce (1931-1958). The number that immediately follows the colon marks the volume of Peirce’s Collected Papers, whereas the number that immediately follows the decimal point refers to the paragraph in the particular volume.
Theoretical Framework and Methodology

represented object to some degree (see Singer 1980:491). An example is instantaneous photographs since
they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent...[T]his resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they are physically forced to correspond point by point to nature (Peirce 1931-1958:2.281).

A cross is another example of an icon, where the existential cross consisting of a stake with a transverse bar stands for a cross to which the extremities of criminals were fastened or even nailed to face death in ancient history. As a symbol, this icon of a cross represents Christianity. Icons are “inherently oriented toward the past, since these signs function meaningfully without the actual spatio-temporal existence of the represented object” (Parmentier 1987:107).

Peirce classified an index by its contiguity with its object and defined it as
a sign, or representation, which refers to its object not so much because of any similarity or analogy with it, nor because it is associated with general characters which that object happens to possess, as because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand...Indices may be distinguished from other signs, or representations, by three characteristic marks: first, that they have no significant resemblance to their objects; second, that they refer to individuals, single units, single collections of units, or single continua; third, that they direct the attention to their objects by blind compulsion...Psychologically, the action of indices depends upon association by contiguity, and not upon association by resemblance or upon intellectual operations (Peirce in Buchler 1955:107-108).

The index thus “signifies its object solely by virtue of being really connected with it, as with physical symptoms, meteorological signs, and a pointing finger” (Singer 1978:217). The example of smoke and fire, demonstrates how ‘smoke’ is an indexical sign that signifies ‘fire’ (its object), by being directly connected with it.

A symbol in Peirce’s semiosis denotes a very specific sign. Due to the differences between the meaning of a Peircean symbol and the more generic meaning of symbol in other anthropological theories and in common usage, it is essential to clarify the specific meaning of Peirce’s usage of this term. While iconic and indexical signs have a direct relation to their object and do not depend on a mental association, Peirce’s symbol has “a conjoint relation to

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27 The use of ‘symbol’ by many authors is often not clearly defined, but in most cases, may equate to and be used interchangeably with Peirce’s ‘sign’, although within his semiosis, a symbol is but one aspect of a sign.
the thing denoted and to the mind” (1931-1958:3.360). The symbol may be defined as not being related to its object either by contiguity, by shared quality, or by resemblance. Convention alone, links a symbol to its object...In a symbol the conventional sign, object, and representamen are brought together within the sign relation by virtue of an agreement and not by virtue of any quality intrinsic to either object or representamen. Words are of the order of symbols (Daniel 1984:32).

Peirce’s system of semiotics offers a means of interpreting the web of embodied meanings inherent in cultural performances (see Nattiez 1990). Of particular relevance is Peirce’s notion of the pragmatic maxim, in which meaning of the various signs may be understood to consist “of all of the effects they have on participants: which includes everything from body movements, through feelings and emotions, to cognitive and linguistic understandings and expressions” (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:208). Meaning therefore does not solely derive from linguistic or conceptual interpretations, but rather all the effects that the sign may have and even those effects that it may potentially have. This mediated meaning of performance is further illuminated by the German sociologist Hans Joas (1996 (1992):79):

the human being who expresses himself is often surprised by what he expresses, and gains access to his ‘inner being’ only by reflecting on his own expressive acts. This draws attention to two peculiarities of expression which the dualistic [Cartesian] model fails to address. Firstly, we form a clear picture of the meaningful substance of what we vaguely have in mind only through our efforts to express it; and secondly, in our efforts to express something, we always present that which is expressed in such a way that other people can appreciate it. Our relationship to ourselves is therefore conveyed via a medium which we share with others.

In line with this interpretation of meaning, Nattiez maintains that “a musical fact” is comprised of three major categories (1990:i x):

the musical work is not merely what we call the ‘text’; it is not merely a whole composed of ‘structures’...Rather, the work is also constituted by the procedures that have engendered it...and the procedures to which it gives rise: acts of interpretation and perception (Nattiez 1990:i x).

28 Peirce (1931-1958:5.401) considers the idea of the pragmatic maxim in the following quote: Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearing we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

29 A semiotic mediation as informed by a Peircean analysis may be understood “as any process in which two elements are brought into articulation by means of or through the intervention of some third element that serves as the vehicle or medium of communication” (Parmentier 1994:24).
Nattiez draws on Peirce as well as the work of Paul Ricoeur who defines a musical sign as “a linguistic expression with a double meaning, demanding interpretation” (Ricoeur in Nattiez 1990:35). Likewise, the ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (1999) utilises a Peircean-influenced semiosis in his music analyses. He suggests that musical signs may be understood as “sonic events that create an effect in a perceiver” (Turino 1999:224). Musical parameters such as scale, pitch and rhythm may thus function as icons, indices and symbols. As an icon, music may directly relate to other songs or genres through the resemblance of various characteristics. In the music of Wagner or in various Indian ragas, for example, music may act as an index and thus a means of expressing feelings, whereas a particular musical piece that has specific meanings through rules of convention, such as a national anthem or a Bach cantata, may be understood as a symbol (see Fischer-Lichte 1992:121).

To review the discussion thus far, performance is a broad, wide-ranging genre and hence, its study is inherently difficult. It is common therefore for researchers to draw upon a range of available theoretical models to create frameworks that best suit their specific area of interest. However, there are also considerable difficulties in the development of a vocabulary that satisfactorily accommodates the rich variety of habits and extra-linguistic signs intrinsic to performance. Precise descriptions of physical movements in cultural practices, for example, are often awkward and wordy. Similarly, the construction of the category of ‘intangible cultural heritage’ by international organisations reflects their increasing recognition of the key cultural role of performance. Yet such terminology is not without conceptual weaknesses, in particular the dichotomisation of material and immaterial culture.

Semiotic frameworks that utilise linguistic categories to interpret and read ‘culture-as-text’ generally do not adequately address the abundance of extra-linguistic signs in both the domains of culture and language. Further, while language as a cultural system seems to be mostly integrated and rule-bound, its theoretical structure may not necessarily translate to cultural performances such as recreational sport and aesthetic entertainment (see Lewis:10). In addition, systems of analysis utilising such theoretically constructed and linguistically oriented models are not necessarily “consonant with indigenous [and local] understandings which, in preliterate societies, are frequently embedded in practices (doing) rather than spelled out in ideas (sayings)” (Jackson 1983:339). Indeed, embodied practices such as performance are not reducible to a linguistically-based semiosis, since they “are always open to interpretation; they are not in themselves interpretations of anything” (Jackson
1983:339). A sign such as a performance never communicates "in vacuo, but in a context, in relationship to other signs" (Zeman 1977:27).

'The body' is therefore situated rather ambiguously, able to be viewed both as a lived body in a phenomenological sense and as an object in a semiotic sense (Garner 1994). Peirce's theoretical framework, however, offers a means of addressing this difficulty (see Buchler 1955:74-97). In addition to the triadic concept of signs and the trichotomies for the analysis of different aspects of a sign and the relationships between the three components of the triad: sign/object/interpretant, Peirce's model is also phenomenological (see Buchler 1955:74-97). Peirce has three basic phenomenological categories 'Firstness', 'Secondness', and 'Thirdness' which serve as "basic modes of appearance or experience" (Lewis 1995:238n6). Whilst the terms 'Secondness' and 'Thirdness' are not relevant to this discussion and thus will not be described here, the category of 'Firstness' is useful for the analysis of performance since it is associated with the 'experiential quality' of feeling, "the conception of being or existing independent of anything else" (Buchler 1955:322-323). 30 All experience therefore depends on 'Firstness' and may be thought of as a "may be, a necessary possibility without which there could be no actuality" (Lewis 1995:236). This Peircean framework has been utilised by a number of anthropologists including Lowell Lewis (1992; 1995; 1999; 1993), E. Valentine Daniel (1984; 1996), Richard Parmentier (1985a; 1985b; 1987; 1994) and Sally Ann Ness (1992), who have been of primary influence in developing the framework of this analysis.

My analysis will primarily, although for the most part implicitly, draw upon a Peircean-influenced semiotic framework as a means of elucidating performance traditions as dimensions of social action. I believe that Peirce's iconic, indexical and symbolic signs are particularly effective in highlighting the nature of cultural and social elements and meanings and in facilitating an understanding of the relationships inherent in a performance: that between performer and self, performer and audience, and performance and society. Further to this semiotic model, Peirce's philosophical framework incorporates a type of phenomenology that refers "to basic modes of appearance or experience" (Lewis 1995:238n6), an emphasis which is particularly useful in

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30 This phenomenon is the first term in each of Peirce's three trichotomies: qualisign (Trichotomy I), icon (Trichotomy II) and rheme (Trichotomy III) as well of Trichotomy I, which is "of the sign itself...[and] is the realm of oneness, quality and possibility" (Turino 1999:231). Peirce's iconic sign, for example, therefore acts as a 'First' (see Lewis 1992:84). See appended glossary for definitions of these terms.
the context of this thesis. Now that the main methodological framework has been established, I will examine the main types of performances that were evident during my research in Badakhshan.

**Types of Performances: Sacred and Profane Practices**

**Religious Performances and Recreational Entertainment**

The dichotomisation of society into sacred and profane domains was a key concern of Emile Durkheim (1976 (1915)). He believed this binary categorisation was a universal phenomenon in which religious practices, as part of the sacred realm, reflected the attempt of a society to worship itself (Eriksen 1995:198). However, this structural opposition of the sacred and profane is undoubtedly problematic (see Eriksen 1995:198; Schneider 1976:207-208) and at the very least, cannot be seen to be universally applicable. In fact, it seems more likely that there are many cases of borderline or 'in between' categories. Nevertheless, in Afghanistan where the native classification of *haram/halal* (forbidden/permissible) is used, the sacred/profane categorisation can be a helpful distinction in understanding the organisation of cultural practices. This is particularly so when it is utilised in conjunction with a third term that is located between these poles on a continuum of sacred and profane domains. This triadic category (*haram-'in between'-halal*) will be further discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

Islam's normative traditions, especially the Quran, clearly define many practices as sacred, whereas others, such as aesthetic performances, are seen to be more ambiguous and not easily classified into one category or another. As will be further elaborated in Chapter Five, music in Islamic societies often contains religious elements, especially Sufi symbols, yet it was regarded by many of Afghanistan's political leaders from 1992-2001 as a profane and unIslamic practice, and hence the performance of music was deemed to be unlawful. This ambiguity as to the sacred/profane nature of music is further complicated by the fact that degrees of religious orthodoxy change with the emergence of new political groups or players. For example, during the resistance against the Soviet-backed Communist government, the former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani who is a member of the Jamiat-e Islami political party (see Chapters Three and Four), was regarded by some — although not by all —as a relatively orthodox leader. Yet with the arrival of the
ultra-extremist Taliban militia, his religio-political views were termed by the Jamiat-e Islami party itself as well as by international observers, as 'moderate'. In Afghanistan, therefore, 'religious' categorisation is fluid and contextual, with the consequence that cultural practices may be variously interpreted as *haram* or *halal*.

The cultural performances of religious rituals, such as Islam's *id* prayers, however, are sacred activities that are clearly defined by habit, continuity and predictability (see Myerhoff 1984:151, 173). During these specially marked events participants "engage in embodying their most important concerns" (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:208). On a continuum of participation, religious performances tend to be more transformative than entertaining and thus accord with Turner's notion of liminal phenomena. Connerton (1989:44-45) succinctly describes such sacred rituals as:

> formalised acts...[that] tend to be stylised...and stereotyped...Because they are deliberately stylised, they are not subject to spontaneous variation, or at least are susceptible of variation only within strict limits...They do discharge expressive feelings; but this is not their central point...Rites are felt by those who observe them to be obligatory, even if not unconditionally so, and the interference with acts that are endowed with ritual values is always felt to be an intolerable injury inflicted by one person or group upon another...Rites have the capacity to give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them.

Sacred practices can therefore be distinguished from everyday activities by frameworks that are recognisably marked as special, essential and important and that rely on "a high level of consensus in belief and practice" (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:208-209). A limited vocabulary and a simple repertoire of bodily movement, which is often easily predictable and repeatable, are often common characteristics of religious practices (see Connerton:59-61). While a religious ritual that is expressed through physical movement may draw equally on iconic, indexical and symbolic signs, symbolism is most commonly the significant feature.

Although clear boundaries exist between some sacred and profane activities in Afghanistan, other cases are more ambiguous. Sport, for example, is a practice that is definitely a popular form of non-religious entertainment. Colloquially, it is often associated with "amusement, diversion, fun or pleasure" (Arnold 1979:145-146). Academic scholars tend to locate the practice of sport

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31 Chapter Five will discuss some Islamic terms with respect to entertainment.
somewhere between play and games. When included within the genre ‘game’, sport may be perceived as a social system that
always involve[s] fixed and public rules, predetermined roles, defined goals, and built-in criteria for evaluating the quality of the performance. The rules are for the most part nonnegotiable and internally coercive (MacAlloon 1984:254).

Sport, therefore, is generally understood as embedded in social values and with explicit “rule-bound, ritualistic and institutionalized” agendas (Arnold 1979:145). However, John MacAlloon postulates that in certain contexts, some of the “affective/experiential qualities of games” may actually “conflict with the hidebound character of the rules, particularly in cultural milieus where ‘fun’ is associated with deviance” (1984:255). Indeed, during some games such as that of a penalty shoot-out at a World Cup soccer match, participants may enter “into states of utter earnestness and commitment, at times becoming a rapture or a sickness unto death” (MacAlloon 1984:255).

Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that although generally understood as a recreational practice, sport has a strongly competitive character. Sporting activities entail “whole-bodied exertion, competition, the employment of skill, uncertainty of outcome and some element of danger (Arnold 1979:145). In many societies, sports such as soccer are perceived as “vehicles of identity, providing people with a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves and others, whether latitudinally or hierarchically” (MacClancy 1996:2). Jeremy MacClancy (1996:4) defines sporting practices in a manner that applies more broadly to the genre of performance, namely as
ways of fabricating in a potentially complex manner a space for oneself in...[a] social world...Sport does not merely ‘reveal’ underlying social values, it is a major mode of expression. Sport is not a ‘reflection’ of some postulated essence of society, but an integral part of society and one, moreover, which may be used as a means of reflecting on society...a sport is an embodied practice in which meanings are generated, and whose representation and interpretation are open to negotiation and contest.

The Taliban militia, alleging adherence to Islam’s normative traditions, banned most sporting activities in the areas of Afghanistan under their control. In contrast and for a range of reasons which will be later elucidated, religio-political leaders in the anti-Taliban United Front seemed to condone sport as a

32 A discussion of the definitions and the relations between these genres with respect to sport is not the aim of this thesis. Further comments may be sought from Huizinga (1949), Callois (1969), Blanchard and Cheska (1985), MacClancy (1996), MacAlloon (1984), Arnold (1979:144), and Lewis (1992), who examined these categories in more detail.
Aesthetic Entertainment: Music and Dance Performances

All aspects of cultural practices may express an aesthetic judgment, whereby certain ideas of the aesthetic become synonymous with a particular cultural style. While the recreational genre of sport noticeably emphasises a “quest for victory” (Arnold 1979:144), entertainment practices such as poetry, music and dance are mostly concerned with social and cultural values. In Afghanistan, during its modern and Communist periods, aesthetics would most probably have been termed ‘art’, especially by the Afghan elite. In contrast, the censorship of artistic practices throughout Afghanistan during the time of my research in 1998 and 1999, made it difficult to establish whether and on what basis, individuals or communities formulated ideas of aesthetics.

I shall employ the term ‘aesthetic entertainment’ to discuss what is categorised in Western societies, and what was most probably understood by the elite in Afghanistan pre-1989, as an artistic event. However, this is not to imply that an aesthetic domain exists separate from the rest of human life in Afghanistan, or that ‘Western’ notions of art or ‘high culture’ are more highly aesthetically elaborated than ‘traditional culture’. In fact, I shall use the term ‘aesthetic’ to demarcate specifically those performances with an entertainment emphasis that were deemed impermissible (haram) during the time of my research, from those mostly recreational performances such as sport, which were considered to be more legitimate (halal). For example, prior to the emergence of the Taliban, the ‘aesthetic’ practice of music was generally tolerated. Since their defeat in November 2001, music performances have once again resurfaced as acceptable public events. Hence, the term ‘aesthetic’ is primarily adopted in this analysis to distinguish between practices that were banned and those that were not banned particularly during the Taliban era but also more insidiously with the rise of orthodox Islam during the mujahideen period.

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33 An aesthetic value is understood here as the response derived from the experience of the environment or particular natural and cultural attributes within it. This response may be to either visual or non-visual elements and can embrace emotional response[s], sense of place, sound, smell and any other factors having a strong impact on human thought, feelings and attitudes (AHC 1994).
The problematic conceptualisation of 'art' and 'artist' in an Islamic context is clearly apparent in the domains of music and dance, since art that is expressed through the body is generally considered to be 'unIslamic'. This hierarchy of degrees of 'acceptable' cultural practices means that those Afghans who perform aesthetic practices are usually socially marginalised. Artists – especially in rural areas – are usually members of the lower stratum of a community, performing tasks that are locally regarded as menial as well as providing music at rites of passage or during other celebrations. In fact, in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999, locals did not refer to the performance of poetry, music and dance as honar (art) or honarmandana (artistic), nor was a performer regarded as or seeking to be known as a honarmand (artist).

Aesthetic entertainment is comprised of both tangible and intangible qualities, that is of objects and actions, and may be understood as a physical manifestation of internalised culture or habit. The body may thus be understood as a social aesthetic field, communicating a range of culturally patterned sensory experiences. However, this is not to deny that aesthetic practices provide the opportunity for individual and personal expression. Indeed, Hans Joas (1996 (1992):80) describes aesthetic expression as

[a] sphere in which a human being, whether creating or appreciating, expresses himself as a whole person; in this respect the realm of artistic [and for that matter aesthetic] expression goes beyond all rule-bound or set purposive actions.

Aesthetic practices, therefore, can be understood as habitual, metaphorical and experiential. This idea is aptly expressed by Raymond Williams (1965:40-41) who describes aesthetic events as involving

highly developed and exceptionally powerful rhythmic means, by which the communication of experience is actually achieved...The dance of the body, the movements of the voice, the sounds of instruments are, like colours, forms and patterns, means of transmitting our experience in so powerful a way that the experience can literally be lived by others. This has been felt, again and again, in the actual experience of the arts, and we are now beginning to see how and why it is more than a metaphor; it is a physical experience as real as any other.

The aesthetic entertainment practices that will be discussed in this thesis are mostly music and dance performances. Undoubtedly, these aesthetic events refer to 'something' but at the same time they are particularly polysemous, that is they generate multiple possible meanings and emotions (see Nattiez 1990:37). Music, like all aesthetic practices, is always embedded in its social and ideological context. It may be produced in three ways. Firstly, by moving the body (vocal cords, limbs), secondly with the assistance of an instrument, or, thirdly, through a combination of the first two (for example, simultaneously
singing and playing an instrument). Since much of the music during my research was vocalised, with the lyrics often poetry, my use of the category ‘music’ necessarily incorporates linguistic elements and their implications. Related to this, Erika Fischer-Lichte (1992:126) suggests that whereas the meanings of sound tend to largely reflect concrete things, the meanings of music are more commonly abstract in nature.

During my research in Badakhshan, music was often performed to accompany dances. It thus facilitated the “movement of objects, but also the movement of feelings deriving from the bodily movement that music provokes” (Nattiez 1990:120). When music is used to accompany dance, the meanings created by the music may signify...hopping, striding, climbing, jumping, running etc., the kind of movement as well as the changes in position. The musical signs appear in this way to be most closely linked to the proxemic and gestural signs – in a similar way as singing is related to the linguistic signs. Accordingly, the musical signs can modify the meanings created by the proxemic and gestural signs, may reinforce them, or may contradict them and in this way produce new meanings (Fischer-Lichte 1992:126-127).

Hence, in Peircean terms, the feeling of the music may, for example, imitate the feeling of the movement of hopping through an iconic signification. In the case of singing, both the sound of the voice, which functions in this case as the instrument – an extra-linguistic sign – and the vocalised sound of speech – a linguistic sign – are performed simultaneously, mediated by what has been termed the ‘singing’ and which includes both harmony and rhythm.

Traditional music in Badakhshan is largely based on oral and embodied traditions in which a musician learns from another more experienced musician or grows up in a community of artisans or musicians. In that cultural context, music is not conceptualised as a written text as it tends to be in Western music-literate societies. Given that conventional methods of music and dance research are based on European scientific structural analyses, wherein the performance is reduced to its “immanent properties” of notation (Nattiez 1990:ix), these methodologies seem to be inappropriate to the elucidation of the broader social and political meanings of performance in Badakhshan. Furthermore, I suggest that extra-linguistic signs and experiences, such as the emotions of performer and audience, are more effectively highlighted through the use of a Peircean-influenced phenomenological semiosis rather than by systems of notation.

34 A professional hereditary musician in Afghanistan is called kesbi.
During the last three decades, research on Afghan music has been dominated by three scholars: the Americans Mark Slobin (1976) and Lorraine Sakata (1983), and John Baily (1988; 2001) from Britain. In comparison with these detailed ethnomusicological studies, the academic research of dance in Islamic societies is often problematic. This is largely attributable to the inherent difficulties of studying a transient event that is often seen to express controversial bodily agendas and which consequently, has tended to be a marginal activity. Whilst there is naturally no general consensus on the theoretical approach to the study of dance, most scholars acknowledge that dance is a form of communication and many researchers employ a semiotic and interpretive framework of analysis.

The elusiveness of dance not only in Afghanistan but in the wider Muslim regions of the Middle East and West Asia, however, is not due to literary disregard. On the contrary, dance and dancing have featured in travel monographs and pseudo-scientific literature for centuries. In early anthropological studies, dance was mentioned, albeit fleetingly without detailed commentary and analysis. These allusions and descriptions were often not only vague, but subject to ethnocentric, romantic, Orientalist, and colonial distortions of non-Western dances. An excerpt of the recollection of a performance in Kafiristan at the end of the nineteenth century by the British officer Sir George Scott Robertson, exemplifies a Western colonial interpretation of a local dance in a region that is now divided between Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province and the areas of Nuristan and Kunar in north-eastern Afghanistan:

The appearance of the witch-like old women dancing heavily their peculiar polka dance-step, singly or in pairs, was strange, almost weird...What pleased the Mehtar Jao was a dance of little boys, who bobbed about like cork with the ordinary Kalash step enlivened so as to be almost unrecognisable (Robertson 1986 (1896):51-52).

In general, academic research on dance has also been impeded by its stigmatisation, which can be traced to prevailing negative social and cultural attitudes towards the body. In exploring the reasons behind the low social

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35 The response of the French traveller M. de Monconys upon observing a performance of dervish dances in Cairo in the seventeenth century, for example, fails to transmit any objective information about what the actual performance was about. For him the performers danced for more than an hour, shouting and screaming horribly; they whirled violently at such dizzying speed that their dance went beyond anything the wildest imagination can conceive of at a witches’ sabbath...Their voices changed frequently from the screaming of enraged wolves to the barking of dogs (de Monconys 1648 in Shiloah 1995xiii).
status of dance in many socio-cultural domains, Ness (1992:236n2) points to “an outgrowth or carryover of deeply rooted negative attitudes toward bodily experiences in general and toward the notion of ‘the body’ itself”. In the Western world, for example, the representation of ‘the body’ is often that of “mortality and instinctive, vulgar animality” (Ness 1992:236n2). Hence, there appear to be parallels between orthodox Christianity and orthodox Islam in terms of their prejudicial attitudes towards the body.

At the same time, ‘dance’ has become a broad, non-specific term that tends to loosely and arbitrarily accommodate all performances of rhytmical human actions. It encompasses physically performed ritual and traditional dances and various stylised art performances such as folk, classical, modern, and postmodern dance. In the Western world, ‘dance’ most typically conjures up images and ideas of eighteenth and nineteenth century classical ballet, a very specific cultural form of ‘high art’ that developed from Central European folk dance. In comparison, Western images of Islamic dance are usually confined to the belly dances of Middle Eastern women. Such popular Orientalist interpretations have rendered dance “as an autonomous world, with minimal connections to ordinary social life or movement patterns” (Lewis 1995:227). As a consequence, there has often been little appreciation of its profound cultural significance.

Whilst many definitions of dance are available and in use today, I will refer here to a select number of relevant anthropological and sociological theories. Written almost two decades ago, Royce’s monograph The Anthropology of Dance (1977) stands out as one of the first serious attempts to study dance from an anthropological perspective and with the use of a semiotic framework. Adrienne Kaeppler is also a pioneer in anthropological dance studies, having conducted life-long research in the South Pacific. Like Royce she is an anthropologist with a dance background and uses a structuralist approach that is influenced both by Saussurian semiology as well as Kenneth Pike’s emic/etic distinctions. Kaeppler (2001) sees dance as marked by its expression of movements which are themselves signs and thus function as cultural artefacts that convey the idea that these movements belong to a specific culture or subculture or that a specific type of movement is being activated for a particular purpose. Movement sequences may be audience-orientated to be admired as art or work, they may be participatory to be enjoyed as entertainment or as markers of identity, they may make political or social statements, bring religious ecstasy or trance, or be performed as a social duty.
Conceptual and analytical concerns arising from diverse definitions of dance have led to a number of attempts to enhance the specificity of terminology. Drid Williams, for example, differentiates between the unitary phenomena of dances, the act of dancing, and the dance (1997:232n1). Three excellent and detailed reviews of recent dance/movement studies by Lowell Lewis (1995), Susan Reed (1998) and Brenda Farnell (1999) discuss the current trend in dance research of combining analyses of ‘culture’, ‘embodiment’ and ‘movement’ by utilising phenomenological and semiotic models, while recognising the importance of cultural representation. More recently, there has been a further shift away from the analysis of dance towards a more specific study of ‘movement’ which allows for a “multiplicity of interpretations” (Reed 1998:524). Both Ness (1992) and Lewis (1992) utilise a Peircean-oriented phenomenology in their analyses of performance. In Ness’s pragmatic anthropological study of the Central Philippine ritual dance *sinulog*, she refers to dance traditions as ‘choreographic phenomena’ which not unlike Peirce’s idea of ‘habit’, incorporate “both mental and physical patterns that may signify the dynamic reality of social life and make visible both collective and individual and public and private experiences of that reality” (1992:241n10). Such phenomena include “a range of symbolic body movement processes somewhat broader than the term ‘choreography’ generally denotes” (Ness 1992:235n1). Ness further suggests that dance may serve “in a distinctive way...the need to be remembered - [and even more so] the need to be rendered animate in an immediate sense” (1992:235n1). In fact, dance may crystallise “people’s habits of life and philosophies of action [and enable] access to cultural phenomena” (Ness 1992:233).

During my field research in Badakhshan, the Dari noun *raqs*, which is commonly used in Afghanistan to describe dance, was not a frequently used term. I have therefore chosen to incorporate dance within the genre of cultural performance. This method will allow me to address the movement components of all of the performances (prayer, sport, dance, and music) discussed in this

36 Williams specialises in the study of human actions as sign signification and developed a method called semasiology, combining theories of semiology and semiotics to deal with the semantic content of human body languages.

37 A broader theoretical approach incorporating some of these recent shifts in discussions on dance is evident in the work of a number of anthropologists who have utilised anthropological theory, such as Stephen Wild (1977/1978), Adrienne Kaeppler (1978; 1991), Drid Williams (1981; 1986; 1997), Cynthia Novack (1988; 1990), Jane Cowan (1990), Sally Ann Ness (1992), Lowell Lewis (1992; 1995; 1999), Yvonne Daniel (1995), and Anthony Shay (1999). Some of these researchers have also applied interpretive methods that draw on Geertz’s ‘thick descriptions’ (Wild, Cowan, Novack, Cowan, Ness, Lewis, Daniel and Shay).
thesis; in a more uniform manner rather than in distinctly separate domains, and will further allow me to investigate the linkages between religious and non-religious as well as special and daily events.

If one views movement as a cultural reality, it is possible to deduce its structural properties. This in turn, allows for the articulation of and reflection upon the experiences it may engender, and an understanding of its place within the larger society (Novack 1988:117). As with music and other extra-linguistic media, the meaning of a dance performance can be deduced to a degree through verbal description. Yet, as Nattiez (1990:9) avers, interpreting “the meaning of something in a nonlinguistic domain...in verbal terms...cannot be limited to verbal translation” alone. Lewis also stresses that non-verbal performance genres such as dance, are not easily understood through language as they fall within the domains of extra-linguistic iconic and indexical signs (1992:10). Ness (1992:237n2) further comments that problems of distortion are inherent in cross-linguistic, cross-cultural interpretations of dance that attempt to represent embodied performative practices “in textual form, through written language”. Even within Peirce’s semiotic model wherein language is the preferred domain of symbols (see Lewis 1992:10), it is important to recognise that all linguistic representations of symbolic expressive practices are “linguicentric” and “carry cultural baggage of their own sort” and are thus “deeply compromised instruments of communication” (Ness 1992:238n2).

I suggest therefore that the extra-linguistic and cross-cultural aspects of performance are best addressed by a methodological framework that also incorporates a form of qualitative movement description and visual anthropology. The remainder of this chapter will present these ancillary methodologies.

**Complementary Methodologies**

**Qualitative Movement Description**

The difficulties associated with viewing and interpreting embodied practices other than as a form of mechanical behaviour, are addressed by the ethnomusicologist Alan Merriam (1974) who recommends the use of a codified terminology. Movement systems that utilise codification such as notation, to describe movement, have been employed over the last century, but
predominantly for generating quantitative records of classical, modern and, to some degree, folk dances. There has been limited use of notation systems in anthropological studies which have tended to favour the use of other movement language schemes, particularly the descriptive systems developed by Laban.

Clearly, the Badakhshi subjects of this study do not share the clearly bounded Western categories of prayer, sport, music, and dance. In line with this, the anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, in his study of the songs of the Kaluli people in Papua New Guinea, eloquently describes how “the structure and meaning of Kaluli sounds...[are] inseparable from the fabric of Kaluli social life and thought” (1984:383). This clearly suggests that an evaluation of local concepts is more appropriately achieved through ethnography rather than through the analysis of “decontextualised trait lists” such as music or movement notation (Feld 1984:385). Such an ethnographic approach is adopted within this study and will be supported by filmed excerpts of performances and the use of a modified form of one component of Laban analysis (Effort/Shape).

In order to provide some objective description of the movement qualities of performances, a version of Laban Movement Analysis (henceforth LMA) that primarily draws on Laban’s conceptual movement components of effort and shape, will be utilised as a methodological tool. Three categories of Laban’s movement concepts will be employed. The first category of space encapsulates the idea of how a performer’s body forms itself in its spatial environment. The second category informs on the general use of the body, whereas the third key

38 Systems such as Labanotation and Benesh notation are often used in the choreography of ‘high art’ entertainment such as classical ballet and contemporary dance. They tend to be understood only by specialists who have studied and acquired these complex movement notation skills.

39 Laban analysis is a broadly based term that denotes a method of qualitative and quantitative movement analysis and notation systems and draws attention to “dynamics, the use of space and time and weight, to phrasing, transitions, the shape of the movement, parts of the body used or not used, and to the performer’s sense of the space through which he or she is moving” (Siegel 1998:94). Four conceptual movement components are incorporated in this system: Labanotation, Effort/Shape, Space Harmony, which is sometimes also referred to as Choreutics, and the Fundamentals of Body Movement (see Bartenieff et al. 1984:3). Cecily Dell (1977:7) defines LMA as “a method of describing changes in movement quality [according to] body adaptations in space”. Pre-1984, LMA studies were referred to as Effort/Shape, however throughout this thesis the term LMA will be applied (Bartenieff et al. 1984:3). In Laban’s technical vocabulary, some terms such as space, effort, flow, and shape, were devised that do not necessarily correlate with the common use of these terms in English. For this reason, definitions of some of these terms are provided in the appended Glossary of LMA terms, Appendix Four.
category comments on the four effort elements: Space, Time, Weight, and Flow, which can be understood in terms of how a performer's body concentrates energy. 'Effort' is a key technical LMA term and may be understood as a "mover's attitude toward investing their energy in movement" (Ness 1996:150n36).

While Laban's abstract series of continua\textsuperscript{41} provide an analytical system as well as a language with which to speak about the body moving in time and space (Desmond 1997:50), the theoretical base for LMA is rather problematic. The Laban-trained American dance critic Marcia Siegel (1998:94) identifies a series of interpretive problems that she relates in part to the system's Eurocentricity. She argues that "Laban theory centers on the body and conceives of movement from the performer's point of view, not from the audience's point of view", further asserting that Laban's methods do not address the entire content or process of a performance (Siegel 1998:94).

Certainly, LMA does allow for a description and comparison of movement patterns in particular communities and "provides one model of cross-cultural comparisons of movement lexicons" (Desmond 1997:50). Yet as a sole analytical system, it is insufficient. In fact, an interpretation of embodied movement demands that the character of the performance, "its subject matter, the treatment of that subject matter and qualities that might be ascribed are also understood" (Adshead 1998:167). The performances examined here are not simple physical movements expressing body space and effort qualities but are grounded in experiences and particularly religious, political and social contexts. They thus signify meaning. Lewis (1995:233) also identifies problems with the term 'effort' and points to the difficulties in mediating "the mind/body opposition if one simultaneously reinscribes the related subject/object distinction":

> Concepts such as 'effort' are defined in terms of attitude or attention, all of which are explicitly used with the intention of combining what had formerly been seen as separate physical and mental meanings together. This has proved a useful and productive strategy, to some extent, but it is frequently unclear how Laban descriptions relate the experience of embodied movement to the observation of moving bodies (Lewis 1995:233).

\textsuperscript{41} Some of Laban's continua include, for example, effort qualities such as "the use of the weight of the body (ranging from strong to light),...the body's attitude toward space (ranging from direct to indirect),...the use of time (ranging from quick to sustained)" as well as the use of space (ranging from free to bound) (Desmond 1997:50).
It seems therefore that the movement actions of any embodied practice are not adequately represented by mere deconstruction to "gross physical movements" (Farnell 1999:360) without relating the experience of the performer and the audience. I am therefore in agreement with Brenda Farnell (1999:360) who argues that movement should be viewed within the context of social reality. The intention of this analysis, therefore, is not to notate the movements of embodied practices (ritual, sport and aesthetic entertainment) or the accompanying sounds (songs) but rather to describe their qualities. Such qualitative data well complements a Peircean phenomenological semiotic approach that seeks to interpret performances in their contexts.

**The Use of Film in Recording Performances**

Clearly, the interpretation of performances poses some challenges for the researcher, in part because of their simultaneous expression in "three dimensions of space and one dimension of time" (Farnell 1999:362), but also as a consequence of the complexity of relationships between performers and audience. Critical analysis of a performance is made especially difficult by the fact that it is usually conducted after the event has taken place. However, through visual ethnography, an approximation of the original event is established, allowing for further interpretations of the performance by the researcher by re-viewing the film, but also by the researcher's audience, namely the reader. Film is therefore "a particularly fluent and resourceful means of describing perceptions" (Gardner 1957:348).

The discipline of visual anthropology is concerned with visual materials in anthropological research and with "the study of visual systems and visible culture" (Banks and Morphy 1997:1). The pioneering visual anthropologist David MacDougall (1998:61, 83) perceives visual anthropology as a viable alternative to the written ethnographic text and grants understanding through a "mixing of embodied, synaesthetic, narrative, and metaphorical strands" rather than through unitary meanings. Indeed, an aesthetic performance such as dance, may be considered to be similar to a proto-language that is expressed through "the uttering of the body" (MacDougall 1998:81). Since a verbal description of such an utterance is inevitably prone to the writer's subjective influences, this proto-language may be captured on film and interpreted by the reader/viewer. MacDougall (1998:83) posits that film "both signifies and yet refuses signification...[and instead] asserts itself as figuration".
Due to the inherent limitations of language in the description of non-verbal performances, visual forms of representation are increasingly being used in cultural anthropological research. MacDougall further suggests that whilst "anthropological writing is effective in speaking about human cultures in general, film, like the imaginative arts, can say much about how individuals live within (and transmit) a 'culture'" (1998:80). Moreover, film has the ability to represent cultural phenomena such as performances, gender and class, that exist primarily in relational terms...[and that are] capable of presenting complex networks of images within which a variety of ambiguous cultural constructions and resonances are understood (sexual, ideological, hierarchic) but which are never explicitly acknowledged, or which recur in different combinations (MacDougall 1998:80).

In fact, it is possible that cross-cultural confusions and prejudices can be minimised by the inclusion of filmed events (Gardner 1957). As unchanging documents, unedited film recordings of cultural performances may serve as rich sources of detailed and focused ethnographic information. George Marcus and Michael Fischer (1999:75) find the ability to convey "the subjects' experience more naturally and unproblematically" a further advantage of film over writing. Hence, the rendering of a realistic account in film may produce reactions in readers/viewers that "in meaningfulness, [have] some approximation to the feelings of those to whom the experience actually belonged" (Gardner 1957:347).

Nevertheless, visual anthropology is not without its critics. The process of filming may in itself change the nature of the performance, with the knowledge of being filmed influencing the subject's expression. People are often inclined to perform for the camera in ways that they normally would not. The British dance historian June Layson (1998:148) also maintains that films of expressive movement flatten the representation, distorting "space and dynamic," and, consequently leading to "depersonalized" small images. Furthermore, an edited version of a performance has a "visual perspective distinct from any single view by an eye in the audience" (Martin 1998:35). MacDougall acknowledges that visual representation is prone to misinterpretation and may be overly seductive to the viewer (1998:68). However, while the two-dimensionality of filmed dance does not realistically represent the three-dimensionality of the actual performance with all details and angles, it does serve as an approximation of the actual performance, and is one of the best available methodological tools available to a researcher of performance. It is for this reason that I have included in this thesis a series of cultural performances that I filmed in Badakhshan and later edited and converted to QuickTime movie files. These mini-films will allow readers/viewers some form of direct experience of
the performances of Badakhshan and the opportunity to formulate their own opinions about these cultural practices.

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In summary, this chapter has highlighted two main problems that are associated with the interpretation of cultural performances. Firstly, culture is not static and fixed and, secondly, performances – in particular the performing arts – are polysemous. Further to these interpretive issues, the researcher who ‘looks’ into another culture is inherently subjective and culturally biased. In order to offer a relatively objective analysis, I have chosen a modified form of Peircean semiotics as the main methodology for this thesis. I believe that Peirce’s distinctions of sign relations more than satisfactorily facilitate a multiplicity of interpretations of a variety of linguistic and extra-linguistic performances. This approach is supplemented by visual anthropology with the accompanying CD ROMs containing excerpts of the ‘live’ performances, thereby offering the reader the additional benefits of direct sound and visual images. The use of the specific vocabulary of Laban Movement Analysis further provides some objective descriptions of the performed movements.

Local categories and understandings of events, whenever available, are given primacy in this study. At the same time, by drawing on this range of interpretive tools, I shall aim to comment on the broader meanings of some of the performance events that I witnessed in Badakhshan, and to expose the ways in which this field is open to contestation and marked by the dialectics of domination and resistance.
Badakhshan: Social and Cultural Context

While Afghanistan itself is landlocked, Badakhshan, within the larger context of Central Asia (see Maps 1), is a remote region that has remained closed and isolated in virtually every respect.\textsuperscript{1} Yet in spite of its inaccessibility, Badakhshan like other Afghan provinces has been exposed to a variety of religions, cultures and languages. Cultural influences have included Greek, Arabic, Indian, Persian, Chinese, and Mongolian.\textsuperscript{2} Various major religions such as Buddhism and Zoroastrianism in addition to a number of local religions were once practised but since the mid-seventh century, Islam has been the main religion and continues to be the primary guide in social, cultural and political arenas. Dari-speaking Tajiks constitute the majority of the province’s population, although the living spaces are extensively shared with other ethnic groups, primarily the bilingual Uzbeks, Pushtuns and Kirghiz.\textsuperscript{3} Badakhshan is thus a heterogeneous society.

\textsuperscript{1} One may argue that some areas in Afghanistan are located in South Asia and others in Central Asia. Afghanistan’s political boundaries touch four distinctive geographic areas: the Indian subcontinent in the east, the Far East in its most north-eastern corner, Central Asia in the north, and the Middle East in the west. Its neighbours are thus Pakistan, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran.

\textsuperscript{2} For detailed accounts of these pre-Islamic periods see, for example, Klimburg (1966), Dupree (1973) and Gregorian (1969).

\textsuperscript{3} Dari is the Persian language spoken in northern Afghanistan and is common in Kabul as well as in other urban centres. This language belongs to the west-Iranian sub-branch of the Iranian group of Indo-Iranian languages and is categorised as an Indo-European language (see Kreutzmann 1996:390). As a literary language, Persian emerged in the ninth century in Khurasan (present eastern Iran), in competition with Arabic which had been introduced with Islam. The Afghan historian Hasan Kawun Kakar (1979:143) notes that Dari is slightly different in phonology, vocabulary, and to a lesser extent, morphology, from the modern
This chapter presents the social and cultural context of Badakhshan as a necessary preliminary to later discussion of the main players and particular settings of performance events in this province. Twenty-three years of civil war throughout Afghanistan, from the time of the Marxist coup in 1978, have exacted a profound and far-reaching toll on Afghan culture. From what was ostensibly a conflict between Islam and Communism, the independence of the Afghan state versus the imposition of a foreign social and political structure, ethnic and religious tensions have come to the fore as major political factors. Similarly, in Badakhshan, manifold identities and allegiances have meant that social, cultural, religious, regional, and political disputes have become central features of everyday life. These in turn have impacted upon local understandings and the continued practice of cultural heritage.

**Borders, Geography and Population**

The province of Badakhshan was once known as the ‘Kingdom of Badakhshan’ and according to local legend, its royal family could trace its lineage to Alexander the Great (see Barthold et al. 1960:852; Holzwarth 1990:36). In 1883, the territory controlled by the aristocratic Yarid dynasty (see Chapter Four), which comprises contemporary Badakhshan, was incorporated in the newly established Province of Badakhshan and Kataghan (welayat-e qataghan wa badakhshan) (see Holzwarth 1990:14). Until the border treaties of 1873, 1879 and 1893, Afghan Badakhshan, as the province is now known, included eastern Takhar as well as Gomo-Badakhshan which now Persian of contemporary Iran. Dari had usually been the language of both the court and administration in Afghanistan and was spoken by Tajiks, Hazaras, Qizilbash (Twelver Shiite Persian mercenaries of Turkic origin), and Aimaq (mostly Sunni but also some Twelver Shiite Persian-speaking nomads of western Afghanistan with Turkic, Mongol and Tajik influences) (see Gregorian 1969:36; Kakar 1979:143; Orywal 1986a:29-30). While Afghanistan’s Constitution in 1964 declared Dari an official language, during Daoud’s Republican period (1973-1978), however, Pushto was made the official language of Afghanistan (see Shalinsky 1994:35n3). The written languages in Afghanistan are Pushto, Dari and Uzbek; the others exist only as oral languages. The ethnonyms Tajik, Uzbek and Kirghiz are used here in both linguistic and ethnic contexts. The terms therefore refer to the Tajik-, Uzbek- and Kirghiz-speakers as well as the Tajik, Uzbek and Kirghiz ethnic groups. Both Uzbek and Kirghiz are Altaic languages, belonging to the north-western group of the Turkic languages (see Shahrani 1979:47).

4 Kataghan is the former name for what has since 1970 been divided into Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar provinces. A number of traditions such as music and dance are still referred to as Kataghan and will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.
Badakhshan: Social and Cultural Context

belongs to Tajikistan (Grevemeyer 1982:9). Not until 1896 was the Province of Badakhshan and Kataghan formally integrated into the territory of Afghanistan. In 1963, the province and its administrative districts were reorganised and the regions of Badakhshan and Kataghan subdivided into the provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz and Baghlan (see Adamec 1972:26). Since 1964, the demarcation of Badakhshan’s internal borders has persisted (Holzwarth 1990:14).

In the north and north-east, Badakhshan adjoins Gorno-Badakhshan by the natural border of the Amu Darya, that is the Oxus River of antiquity (see Maps 1, 2 and 3). The upper part of this river, the Panj-e Darya, drains some of Afghanistan’s largest snowfields since the mountain ranges of Tajikistan, Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan converge at the Pamir Mountains near the north-eastern Wakhan corridor. The Pamir Knot alone claims as many as one hundred peaks ranging between 6100m and 7620m (see Dupree 1973:1), with high mountain valleys thus “hemmed in by parallel mountain ranges” (Shahrani 1979:11n3). Not surprisingly, locals refer to the region as bam-e dunya (Roof of the World) (see Afghanaid 1995:14). The Wakhan Corridor connects Badakhshan with China through a short stretch at the province’s most north-eastern point. In the north of Badakhshan, the mountains of Darwaz create a further natural boundary with Gorno-Badakhshan. The Khwaja Mohammad range, a northerly mountain ridge extending from the Hindu Kush,

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5 This once united territory of Badakhshan is now divided into Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan and Badakhshan in Afghanistan, but separated only by the Amu (Oxus) River.
6 In 1963 Badakhshan was re-divided into the following administrative divisions (woluswali and alaqadar): Jurm, Darwaz, Keshem, Wakhan, Ragh, Shahr-e Bozorg, Baharak, Koran-e Munjan, Khwahan, Zebak, and Sheghnan (see Adamec 1972:26). During the Communist regime (1978-1992), these divisions were further re-divided into seven woluswalis or districts: Darwaz, Ishkashim, Faizabad, Jurm, Keshem, Ragh, and Wakhan and six alaqadaris or smaller districts: Baharak, Koran-e Munjan, Khwahan, Shahr-e Bozorg, Sheghnan, and Zebak (see UNIDATA 1992:1). It is likely that similar administrative divisions were recognised by President Burhanuddin Rabbani (1992-2001) and the provincial government of Badakhshan.
7 The Amu Darya runs along the northern border of Afghanistan. It originates in Badakhshan in the Wakhan Corridor between the Hindu Kush range in the south and the Pamir mountain range in the north.
8 The Pamirs are divided into the ‘Great Pamir’ (known locally as Pamir-e Kalan or Pamir-e Chong) and the ‘Little Pamir’ (Pamir-e Kuchek or Pamir-e Kurd) (see Afghanaid 1995:14; Kreutzmann 1996:51; Senarcens de Grancy 1978; Shahrani 1979:11). The Great Pamir consists of the upper part of the Pamir Darya (Pamir River, originating in Tajikistan) and the basin of Sar-e Kul (or Zor Köl meaning ‘Great Lake’) at the border Tajikistani Gorno-Badakhshan and Afghan Badakhshan), whereas the Little Pamir includes the upper part of the Aksu River (located in the Chinese Pamir, Xinjiang Province) and the lakes Besh Ötök Köl (also Chinese Pamir) and Chakhmakin Köl (Afghan Pamir) (see Kreutzmann 1996:49, 51).
largely demarcates the province from that of neighbouring Takhar (see Kussmaul 1965a:19). Along its south-eastern border of the eastern Hindu Kush, Badakhshan abuts Pakistan near Zebak and provides a seasonal, but mostly non-motorable route to Pakistan over the Dorah and Shah Salim passes. In the south of the province, Badakhshan connects with the Anjuman Pass, whereas in the west in the Keshem valley, the mountains gradually diminish into a terrain of hills and plains.

Wolfgang Holzwarth (1980) suggests a triadic categorisation of the province that is a helpful means of conceptualising its natural features and settled areas as well as the multiplicity of its historical dominions. The province may thus be divided into the western mountain regions that include the urban areas of Ragh (1520m), Shahr-e Bozorg (1800m), Faizabad (1200m), Argu (1800m) and Keshem (960m); the central basin with Jurm (1550m) and Baharak (1480m) as well as settlements along the lower valley sections in which the Kokcha, Warduj and Zardew rivers converge; and the high mountain regions of Zebak (2600m), Ishkashim (2660m) and Koran-e Munjan (2550m) in the southern, eastern and northern regions of Badakhshan (see Holzwarth 1980:179-180; Snoy 1996:118; UNIDATA 1992:3). So as to take best advantage of

9 The Dorah Pass (approximately 4260m) is also known in Badakhshan as Topkhana (see Dorronsoro 1992:7; Jennings 1999), whereas the literature generally uses the term Dorah Pass (Kussmaul 1965b:27; Olufsen 1904:19; Senarclens de Grancy 1978:23). Biddulph (1986 (1880)) and Wood (1841) offer detailed maps of this pass. During the jihad against the Soviet-backed government, as well as during the anti-Taliban resistance, this pass served as an important supply route for commanders and international aid agencies (see also von Moos and Huwyler 1983:134). The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (henceforth UNICEF), for example, used this pass to transport educational materials into Badakhshan (see Heneghan 2001; Youngs 1999). Once in Pakistan, the path leads to Garm Chashma before arriving in Chitral in the North-West Frontier Province.

10 In Dari, this pass is known as the Kotal-e Anjuman (4200m) (Holzwarth 1990:13) and leads to Nuristan Province and the Panjshir Valley of Kapisa Province.

11 Whilst exact demographic figures for Faizabad do not exist, according to the estimates of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan, Faizabad district, inclusive of the settlements of Argu, Daram, Tishkon and Yaftal (for a map of these valley regions see Snoy 1996:116), has a population of 216,095 (Personal communication January 2002 United Nations Regional Coordination Officer (UNRCO) Badakhshan). The population figure for the period of 1998-2002 was higher, primarily due to fighting between the Taliban and the United Front near the borders of the province, which continued until approximately September 2001. World Food Programme (WFP 2001) stated that over 100,000 persons alone were internally displaced in Faizabad even prior to 11 September 2001. Keshem district has a population of 112,714, Baharak district is thought to have 70,981 inhabitants, and Ishkashim district has a population of 11,219 (Personal communication UNRCO, 2002). Argu is in a fertile loess-covered agricultural area at approximately 1800m above sea level. The Kokcha River eventually empties into the Amu Darya near Ai Khanoum in Takhar province.
sustainable agricultural practices, most settlements in Badakhshan are situated near river or mountain valleys or plateaus. For example, the provincial capital of Faizabad is located near fertile loess foothills that dominate the landscape of the Kokcha and Mashad river valleys in central-western Badakhshan.12

The physical territory of Badakhshan covers approximately 47,000 square kilometres (Hayward 1995:6) and ranks fifth in size amongst Afghan provinces (see Mokhtarzada 1994:3). For the last two decades, however, no reliable demographic figures on any of Afghanistan’s 32 provinces have been available.13 Moreover, pre-existing statistics are likely to be inaccurate since in 1979 when the first partial national census was conducted, the inhabitants of the regions surveyed were already embarking upon rebellion. A considerable number of the population therefore would have been fleeing to Pakistan and many of those Afghans remaining behind, would have been unwilling to participate.14 In 1999, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (henceforth UNOCHA) estimated the population of Badakhshan at 765,999.15 For comparison, Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan with a territory of 64,000 square kilometres had an estimated 200,000 inhabitants in the year 2000 (Grevemeyer 1982:9; UNDP 1999). However, in 2001, prior to the commencement of the United States’ military campaign, over one million Afghans were said to be internally displaced (UNHCR 2002). There is no doubt that although Afghanistan has since entered a new phase in

12 The Oxford English Dictionary (henceforth, OED) defines loess as “a deposit of fine yellowish-grey loam which occurs extensively from north-central Europe to eastern China...and elsewhere, esp. in the basins of large rivers, and which is usually considered to be composed of material transported by the wind during and after the Glacial Period” (OED 1989-2002). These valleys are fertile agricultural regions and provide good grazing land for seasonal nomads (see also Grevemeyer 1982:11-12; Holzwarth 1980:179-180). The entire province has an approximate population of 710,000 (Personal communication with UNRCO Badakhshan, 2001).

13 The provinces (welayats) are Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Baghlan, Sar-e Pul, Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Faryab, Badghis, Herat, Farah, Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul, Ghazni, Paktya, Paktika, Uruzgan, Ghowr, Wardak, Logar, Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, Bamiyan, Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan, Khust, and Nuristan (see Map 2).

14 As a result of fighting and natural disasters, large numbers of refugees fled Afghanistan from the late 1970s until the end of 2001. Before the United States-led military attack against the Taliban and al Qaeda members in Afghanistan in October 2001, 3.6 million refugees were living in camps due to drought and fighting (see UNHCR 2002). The repatriation of Afghan refugees since the defeat of the Taliban has thus far proved highly successful. In mid-June 2002, UNHCR announced that over one million Afghans had returned, with a further million expected by the end of 2002.

15 The source of this figure is from World Health Organization (Personal communication 12 January 2002 UNRCO Badakhshan). In comparison, in 1998 UNOCHA estimated the population of Badakhshan to be approximately 500,000 (see 1998:48).
its political history, refugee movements will continue for some time as a result of continuing political instability, drought and famine. Relatedly, since 1992, the concomitant factors of civil unrest and internecine fighting have led to a dramatic increase in the size of urban areas throughout Afghanistan.\(^\text{16}\) The ethnic, religious and political diversity of Badakhshan has been further compounded by the fact that many inhabitants of neighbouring provinces sought shelter especially in its capital of Faizabad in the period from 1998 to 2001 as the rapidly shifting frontlines between the United Front and the Taliban encroached upon their villages.

**Ethnic groups and associations of social affinity**

Since the formation of the political territory of Afghanistan in 1747, all inhabitants of this plural society have been referred to, by non-Afghans, as ‘Afghans’. In fact, the term ‘Afghan’ is actually best understood as a colonial cultural construction used to conveniently categorise and coalesce the diverse peoples living within the territorial borders of Afghanistan. The use of this terminology fails to acknowledge the multiple, sensitive and highly political nature of ethnicity in Afghanistan. Indeed, the ethnonym ‘Afghan’ is particularly problematic since the term has been traditionally applied to the ethnicity of the ruling elite (1747-1992), the Pushtuns.\(^\text{17}\) Increasingly, since the 1960s, non-Pushtun groups have rejected Pushtun dominance (Roy 1995:106) with the consequence that the Tajiks, Hazaras or Uzbeks, for example, often tend to identify themselves firstly in terms of their own ethnic group and only then as Afghan. It is thus essential to recognise that the Afghan and likewise Badakhshi population, consists of many different ethnic groups.\(^\text{18}\) This situation is further complicated by the fact that many of the ethnic groups in Afghanistan, such as the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pushtuns, and Turkmen, extend across national borders. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that ethnic

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\(^{16}\) Kabul, Afghanistan’s largest city, has an estimated population of 1.7 million. Due to the massive return of refugees to Kabul since the defeat of the Taliban and their retreat from the capital in mid-November 2001, the size of this city has increased significantly. Herat and Kandahar have approximately 200,000 inhabitants and Mazar-e Sharif approximately two million (see ReliefWeb 2000).

\(^{17}\) This is despite the fact that two rulers of pre-1992 Afghanistan were not Pushtun – the Tajik Bacha-e Saqqao and Babrak Karmal who was alleged to be of Tajik parentage (see Chapter Four).

\(^{18}\) The people of Badakhshan refer to themselves as ‘Badakhshani’ or ‘Badakhshi’; the latter term will be used throughout this thesis to identify the inhabitants of the province.
identities in Afghanistan are not only diverse and complex, but also manipulable. In the same way that 'culture' has ceased to be understood as a stable entity that coincides with a nation, society, or ethnic group, ethnic identity is no longer conceptualised as "tightly territorialised, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous units" (Lock and Kaufert 1998:5). Given that few ethnic groups have existed in total isolation, the use of sharp boundaries to delineate them can in itself prove problematic since boundaries become noticeably porous as a consequence of shared histories and intermarriage.

Traditionally, scholars have typically utilised 'etic' forms of classification, with such categories as religion, language and culture, to determine who does and does not belong to a particular ethnic group. The understandings generated by this approach may contrast markedly from 'emic', or local ideas of ethnicity, although the latter may not always be readily forthcoming or accessible. Accordingly, the Swiss anthropologist Erwin Orywal (1986b:74) proposes that the concept of ethnic identity must be understood as situational, whereby ethnic groups may be regarded as temporally and spatially positioned with respect to each other, representing their recognition, inclusion or exclusion of other groups. The important point here is that a group is constantly in dynamic process and thus may not necessarily be seen to have clear and definite boundaries (see Orywal 1986b:73-74). Moreover, this perspective of ethnicity incorporates the 'emic' factors of perceptions, feelings and actions of social affiliation (Orywal 1986b:74), with individuals potentially seeking to join a particular community for a range of economic, political, social or emotional benefits (see Schetter 1999:94). In Afghanistan, the connections between ethnicity and politics have become particularly apparent in the last two decades. Among the various mujahideen (members of the Afghan Islamic resistance) that first fought against the Communist regimes (1978-1992), and then against each other under the Islamic State of Afghanistan (1992-2001), and during the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1997-2001), each group vied for representation in any future government. It was thus inevitable that the selection of Afghanistan's post-Taliban interim government in Bonn in November 2001 was also marked by ethnic rivalries, with each particular group claiming a stake in the new administration. The establishment of an ethnically balanced government was thus a key issue for the Emergency Loya Jirga that was held in Kabul in June 2002.

While bearing in mind the complexities inherent in the concept of ethnicity, in the following paragraphs I will discuss some of the major groups living in
Badakhshan: the Tajiks, Pushtuns, Uzbekes, Kirghiz, Moghols, and Hazaras. In Badakhshan, people tend to associate themselves with the geographical region from which they originate, preferring to identify themselves as Yaftali,\textsuperscript{19} Wakhi, Keshemi, Ishkashimi, etc. However, the social organisation of the various groups and micro-societies within these regions is complex. Both the extended family (\textit{khanawada}) and the network of kinship relations (\textit{kheysh wa qawm}) are important social units whose members tend to be hierarchically organised and linked through affiliations of solidarity, common interests and values (see Shahrani 1998:218-219). Prevalent among most ethnic groups in Afghanistan, in particular the tribally-organised Pushtuns, the Arabic word \textit{qawm} is polysemic.\textsuperscript{20} This term may stand for tribe, clan, group, nation, linguistically- or vocationally-based association, local lineage, village cluster, and/or family (see Glatzer 1998:170; Orywal 1986b:78-79; Tapper 1991:47). \textit{Qawm} thus encompasses a variety of networks based on relations of reciprocity and solidarity. More usually, however, it denotes a large kinship association that is based on patrilineal descent and related by marriage (Shahrani 1998:218). In Badakhshan, in addition to the frequent use of the term \textit{qawm}, the term \textit{konda} is common and refers to small groups of kin which usually do not consist of more than six to eight houses (see also Holzwarth 1990:173; Kussmaul 1965b:522-523, 525). In addition, the term \textit{khel} is sometimes used to denote a patrilineal group of relatives (see von Moos and Huwyler 1983:115n2), especially in Sunni and Ismaili (Sevener Shiite Muslim) Tajik communities.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Yaftal valley is located north of Faizabad. Yaftalis are thought to be one of the oldest groups in Badakhshan (see Holzwarth 1990:33).

\textsuperscript{20} I use the term ‘tribe’ carefully in light of recent conventions in which a tribe is defined as a repetitive, dynamic and reversible process, “both in structure and in membership” (see Glatzer 1998:172; Manz 1989:29).

\textsuperscript{21} While the categorisation of a group into ‘tribe’, ‘clan’, or ‘lineage’ is useful for a sociological or anthropological analysis, their use, like the term ‘ethnic group’, is also problematic. These terms are constructs and do not entirely capture the complex characteristics of the group’s social organisation (see Tapper 1983b:9). In this thesis, the terms ‘tribe’ and ‘clan’ are used synonymously within the context of a subgroup of a major lineage.

\textsuperscript{22} The living arrangement of a \textit{khel} is called a \textit{qeshlaq} (von Moos and Huwyler 1983:125).
Tajiks

Most commonly inhabiting the northern regions of Afghanistan, the Tajiks are the largest ethnic group in Badakhshan. The role of a number of Tajik men as the main actors in cultural performances will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. The contemporary notion of a Tajik is that of a sedentary, Dari-speaking, non-Pushtun Sunni Muslim, often vocationally engaged as a subsistence agriculturalist, skilled artisan, trader or merchant. According to Nasir Khusraw, the eleventh century Persian poet, philosopher and Ismaili missionary, Dari was already spoken in Badakhshan when he sought exile in the province (see Holzwarth 1990:33). In some northern areas, such as along the Amu Darya border regions of Badakhshan, Takhar and Kunduz, the Dari spoken is occasionally called Tajiki. Yet like the categorisation of ‘Afghan’ people, the classification of ‘Tajik’ is also problematic since, as Bernt Glatzer (1998) perceptively notes, “no recognisable cultural, social or political boundary between them and others” exists (1998:170). Indeed, many Dari- or Tajiki-speaking, non-Sunni Muslims in Afghanistan, without any obviously identifiable unique phenotypical features, may refer to themselves as Tajiks so as to avoid discrimination or persecution by predominantly Sunni leaders and government authorities (see Sakata 1983:6). In contrast, Dari-speaking Pushtuns are never referred to by Tajiks as ‘Tajiks’, but always remain locally categorised as ‘Pushtuns’. Furthermore, in Badakhshan, numerous non-Sunni Tajik communities exist that while sedentary and Persian-speaking, resolutely identify themselves as Ismailis, a 7evener Shiite sectarian group.

A number of factors may have contributed to the formation of an ethnically based categorisation of Afghans. As will be elaborated in Chapter Four, during

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23 The ethnonym ‘Tajik’ was initially first used to refer to the Arabs in the region, since at that time an Iranian who converted to Islam was thought to become an Arab (see Kreutzmann 1996:43n21; Orywal 1986a:22; Sawez 1986). The term ‘Tajik’ was then later assigned to Muslim Iranians who lived in the territories which are now termed Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics (see Klimburg 1966:124; Schurmann 1962:73-74). With the increasing exposure of Central Asian Iranians to Turkic culture, the term ‘Tajik’ was then applied to those Muslim Central Asians who still remained sedentary and retained their Iranian language. The Tajiks mainly inhabit areas in north-eastern Afghanistan, the capital Kabul, areas north of Kabul, west of the Hindu Kush, and particularly the Herat province. This ethnic group is therefore strongly represented in the provinces of Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Takhar, and Herat. Many Tajik communities also live in Kunduz, Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-e Pul, Faryab, Badghis, and Ghowr, smaller groups are in Paktya, Zabul and Ghazni.

24 Nasir Khusraw is a central figure in the Weltanschauung of the Ismailis in Badakhshan and will be further discussed in Chapter Five.
the period of the mujahideen resistance (1978-1992) and under Islamic rule (1992-2001), the civil war led to considerable internal displacement, forcing many Afghans to flee as refugees into neighbouring countries. In exile, these refugees then tended to be grouped together according to their ethnic affiliation rather than in terms of their linguistic or sectarian associations. In addition, the considerable interest of the foreign media in this ethnic categorisation as well as its use by some Afghans for political gain, may have fostered the perception of ethnicity as an important marker of Afghan identity (see Roy 1995:105-106). This more political ethnicisation was a departure from the affiliations of kinship that had been central to traditional Afghan society. And as a consequence, the category ‘Tajik’ came to include most Sunni Persian-speakers. This classification implicitly overlooks marked regional differences. For example, while the Tajiks of Herat in western Afghanistan are embedded in the history and culture of Khurasan and speak a Persian dialect related to that of eastern Iran (Farsi) (see Sakata 1983:7), the language of the Tajiks of Badakhshan has been influenced to a degree by the Turkic-speaking Uzbeks of that region as well as by Tajiki, a Persian dialect spoken in neighbouring Tajikistan and nearby Uzbekistan.

The Ismailis of Badakhshan who inhabit the Wakhan corridor and the Pamir Mountains around the Darya-e Panj as well as the mountains near Koran-e Munjan north of the Anjuman Pass, also refer to themselves as Tajiks. During the nineteenth century, colonial writers termed the Ismailis of this region ‘ghalcha’, which translates as ‘Mountain Tajik’ or ‘Pamir Tajik’ (von Schultz 1914:19-20). More recently, the construct ‘Pamiri’ has been assigned to the people of this region (Orywal 1986a:47; Snoy 1986:140), although similar problems to those of the terms ‘Afghan’ and ‘Tajik’ have inevitably arisen. Indeed, of primary importance is the need to appreciate that the appropriateness

25 Prior to Communist rule in Afghanistan, a person’s identity would be established by the lowest level of social membership, followed by the name of settlement (such as Keshemi), regional/provincial association (Badakhshi), and linguistic association (farsiwan, i.e. Persian-speakers) (see Roy 1995:105). According to Olivier Roy (1995:105), the term Tajik denoted “a subgroup of Persian-speakers, mainly inhabitants of Badakhshan, who had no other ethnonym, such as Baluchis, Sayyids, Arabs etc.”

26 The historical territory of Khurasan today spans the territories of Afghanistan, eastern Iran and neighbouring Central Asian regions. The cities of Bokhara and Samarkand, for example, have large Tajik populations.

27 For the use of the term ghalcha in the literature see, for example, Lentz (1978:11-12), Biddulph (1986 (1880):157-158) and Olufsen (1904:60). Shahrani (1979:44), Holzwarth (1990:35-36) and Kreutzmann (1996:42) have referred to the Ismailis as either Pamir Tajiks or Mountain Tajiks.
and hence the use of these categories may be disdained by the Ismailis themselves.  

The oral languages of the Ismaili peoples of the northern and southern mountain regions in Badakhshan while mutually incomprehensible, are both forms of east-Iranian languages. Although Badakhshan’s Sunni Tajiks have generally been classified by Afghan historians as ‘Tajiks’, Ismaili Badakhshis are usually referred to either directly as Ismailis or by their eponymic classification such as ‘Wakhi’ (the people of Wakhan), ‘Ishkashimi’ (the people living in Ishkashim) and Sheghni (the people of Sheghnan), (see Holzwarth 1990:36). Holzwarth (1990) postulates that the Ismailis’ strong ethnic and cultural identification with their locality may reflect the remnants of a system of categorisation used by Badakhshan’s royal families, possibly pre-sixteenth century, and based on their oral genealogies that dated back to Alexander the Great (see Holzwarth 1990:36). In contrast, the decreased importance attributed to locality by Badakhshis living in other areas of the province may be connected to their conversion to Sunni Islam and their subsequent preference for the term ‘Tajik’ so as to distance themselves from the Ismailis (Holzwarth 1990:36-37).

Chapter Five will discuss the sectarian group of the Ismailis in more detail since they evince a unique relationship to their intangible cultural heritage, which combines elements of local culture, Islam and Sufism. Chapters Six and Seven will present a number of recorded examples of both religious and non-religious aesthetic performances of Badakhshan’s Ismailis.

### Turkic Minorities

The Uzbeks are the second largest ethnic group in Badakhshan and possibly the fourth most important group in Afghanistan with approximately one and a half

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28 I was made aware of the sensitivities of the term ‘Mountain Tajik’ during a seminar presentation at Humboldt University, Berlin, in August 2000. After having mentioned the term in my presentation, I was politely rebuked by a former member of the Ismaili elite from the Pamir region of Badakhshan who described ‘Mountain Tajik’ as derogatory in nature. Instead, he advocated the use of ‘Tajik’ or ‘Tajiks living in the Pamir region’.  

29 They are sometimes also referred to as Pamir languages and have been categorised into the north- and south-east-Iranian sub-branches of the Iranian group of Indo-Iranian languages that are Indo-European languages (see Kreutzmann 1996:390).
million members.\textsuperscript{30} As an ethnic group, the Uzbeks are related to Central Asian Turkic tribes and are the principal Turkic-speaking group of Afghanistan. Over the last one to two centuries, they have departed from their nomadic traditions and have increasingly become concentrated in larger settlements predominantly in northern Afghanistan from Faryab Province in the west to Badakhshan in the east. Two types of Uzbeks may be distinguished. The first is an autochthonous group that lived in this region prior to the creation of the nation of Afghanistan in the eighteenth century. The second group of Uzbeks immigrated to Afghanistan as a result of Tsarist Russian expansionism and subsequent Sovietisation in Central Asia (see Glatzer 1998:172).\textsuperscript{31} In Badakhshan, the Uzbeks are believed to have originated as nomads from Dasht-e Qipchak (the steppes of Qipchak) in the Ural and Altai mountain region (see Holzwarth 1990:23),\textsuperscript{32} having crossed the Amu Darya into Badakhshan as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see Grevemeyer 1982:31-51; Holzwarth 1990:23). The Uzbeks are strongly represented in the central and western parts of the province, especially in, as well as near, Baharak, Jurm, Khash, Faizabad, Argu, and Keshem. Like the majority of Badakhshis, they are Hanafi Sunni Muslims and engage in sedentary occupations as village-dwelling peasants, merchants or artisans.

The Kirghiz are another, albeit much smaller Turkic-speaking pastoralist group living in the north and north-east of the Wakhan Corridor in the Pamir region.\textsuperscript{33} They are originally from the Altai Mountains in Central Asia (see Shahrani 1978b:238) and speak Kirghiz, which like Uzbeki, is an Altaic language belonging to the north-western group of Turkic languages (see Kreutzmann 1996:390; Orywal 1986a:40-41; Shahrani 1979:47). The Swiss anthropologists Pierre Centlivres and Micheline Centlivres-Demont suggest that approximately

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{30} Glatzer estimates the population of the Uzbeks to be equal that of the Hazaras, that is, approximately 1.5 million (1998:170, 172). The provinces of Faryab, Jawzjan, Sar-e Pul, Balkh, Samangan, Kunduz, and Baghlan have especially large concentrations of Uzbek communities (see Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1983:93), whereas in the north-eastern provinces the Uzbeks share the living areas with the Tajiks. The Uzbeks are speakers of a north-western branch of Turkic languages (see Holzwarth 1990:23; Orywal 1986a:44-46).
\item\textsuperscript{31} For comments on this group of Uzbeks that are known as \textit{muhajerin} (refugees) see Mark Slobin (1976:12), Audrey Shalinsky (1979; 1986:290), Pierre Centlivres and Micheline Centlivres-Demont, (1983), and Nazif Shahrani (1984:143).
\item\textsuperscript{32} Dasht-e Qipchak is also known as the Kazakh steppe.
\item\textsuperscript{33} The Kirghiz also live in the Wakhan border regions of Tajikistan, China and Pakistan.
\end{itemize}
3000 Kirghiz lived in the Wakhan just prior to the Marxist coup in April 1978.\textsuperscript{34}

Several villages in Badakhshan, especially in the Kokcha valley between Faizabad and Atin Jelaw as well as near Argu, are associated with what were originally Turkic-speaking Moghol families (see Map 3 and Holzwarth 1990:31).\textsuperscript{35} The Moghols in Badakhshan are also referred to as ‘Chung’ who according to oral legends are believed to be the original descendants of Genghis Khan.\textsuperscript{36} One of my informants pointed out a village near Jurm by the name of ‘Chung’, that was supposedly a typical Moghol village, although I was unable to confirm whether they still spoke Turkic. Indeed, most of these communities have now become Tajik-ised and speak local Dari dialects.

\textsuperscript{34} The current number of Kirghiz in the Wakhan would be significantly lower than these estimates. Many Kirghiz were also killed during the Communist regime. Three months after the coup, the leader of the Kirghiz in the ‘Little Pamir’, Hajji Rahman Qul, with approximately 1300 members of his group, went into exile in neighbouring Pakistan. In August 1982, the Kirghiz refugees were invited by the Turkish government to resettle in Anatolia, Turkey (see Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1983:103).

\textsuperscript{35} Atin Jelaw is a village in western Badakhshan with an important and old caravanserai that continues to serve the Faizabad-Taloqan section of the ancient Wakhan-Baharak-Faizabad-Keshem-Taloqan-Kunduz/Sar-e Pul trade route.

\textsuperscript{36} The Chung are supposed to have arrived in Badakhshan with Genghis Khan (Personal communication with Badakhshi informants, see also Snoy 1996:118). Schurmann (1962) believes that the Chung belong ethnically to the Moghuls and are occasionally also called Ali-Moghol (1962:100-101). In his opinion, these groups are part of the Chagatai Turks that conquered the subcontinent and established the Moghul dynasty (Schurmann 1962:100-101). Snoy (1996) suggests that the Moghols may even have originated from Eastern Turkestan (the larger territory around Kashgar, contemporary Xinjiang Province, China) and therefore may be descendents of the Chagatai and Genghis Khan (1996:113, 127). In contrast, Holzwarth (1980) puts forward the thesis that the Moghols may have originated from a number of Turkic and Turkicised Mongol groups from during the eight to sixteenth century (1990:27), and only later were referred to as ‘Moghol’. From 1500-1650, the locals began to call these Moghols ‘Turk’ (Holzwarth 1990:27), their language being termed ‘Turki’ (Holzwarth 1990:28). One interesting story was told to me by a member of the local elite in Faizabad in June 1998:

When Genghis Khan and his khanate, his moving palace, arrived in this region, the local population had increasingly become frustrated with his horses which grazed on local fields of grass and wheat. Upon the advice of an old woman, the villagers of Jurm decided to grow poppies. The horses ate the poppies and naturally died from poisoning. The locals’ revenge was successful and ensured their survival. Since that time, many villages near Jurm have grown opium poppies.
Push tuns

Whilst it is impossible to provide exact figures, the Push tuns are commonly believed to be Afghanistan's largest ethnic group and may account for approximately forty-two percent of its total population of around twenty-five million (UN 2002). There is now a strong view, however, that given the Push tun losses and dislocation over the last twenty years, the number of Push tuns living in Afghanistan may actually constitute a number either slightly less or equivalent to that of the Tajiks (see Ahady 1995). In Badakhshan, the Push tuns represent a minority group comprised of families of former governors, administrators, military officers, traders, shopkeepers, and nomads.

Since the emergence of Afghanistan as a nation in 1747 until the end of Najibullah's regime in 1992, the Push tuns have provided Afghanistan with almost all of its political leaders. Two large Push tun confederations live in Afghanistan: the Durrani and the Ghilzai, both of which originate near Kandahar. While they are the second largest Push tun tribal confederacy, the Durrani have been the most politically important ethnic group in Afghanistan, having effectively governed Afghanistan for most of its monarchic and

37 Conrad Schetter (2001) raises this problem of statistics in his recent article, claiming that it is "unclear whether the Push tuns constitute 65, 60, 45 or 38 percent of the Afghan population". In Pakistan, the Push tuns are also referred to as Pathans, an Indianised form of Push tun, as well as Pukhtuns. According to Henry Walter Bellew (1999 (1888)) and Henry George Raverty (1888), the etymological explanation is possibly a derivative from the Tajik word pusht, meaning "the back of a mountain range" (quoted in an account given by Gregorian 1969:26).

38 Shahrani (1998:230n31) suggests that one of the reasons why a national demographic census was never completed may have been due to fears that Afghanistan does not have a Push tun majority.

39 The only exception in this period was in 1929 during the nine month rule by the Tajik rebel Habibullah Kalakani (also known derogatorily as 'Bacha Saqqao', the 'Son of a Water-carrier') (see Dupree 1973:452-454). Habibullah Kalakani was from Kohistan, a border region between north-eastern Afghanistan and north-western Pakistan. On 17 January 1929, he took control of the capital (but not of the entire country) and called himself Amir, thereby becoming the first non-Push tun ruler of Afghanistan, albeit for a very brief period indeed – he held the position until 13 October 1929. He was a social and extremist Islamic activist, not unlike a combination of an Afghan version of 'Robin Hood' and the Taliban's Mullah Omar (see Rashid 2000:25). He mobilised the rural people who were disadvantaged by government taxes, and by encouraging adherence to ultra-orthodox Islamic values, offered the abolition of these unpopular taxes and the cancellation of outstanding arrears. As will be seen in Chapter Four, the extremist Taliban militia shared many values with Habibullah Kalakani, such as the introduction of Sharia law (Islamic law) and the abolition of girls' schools.

40 The group of Abdali Push tuns of the Saddozai dynasty of Ahmad Khan, who was the founder of the Afghan state, later became known as the Durrani confederation. After Ahmad Khan's election by the Loya Jirga (Council of Elders), he assumed the title of Shah and called himself Badshah, Durr-i-Durrani, literally "Pearl of Pearls" (Dupree 1973:333).
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republican periods since the times of Ahmad Shah Durrani in the mid-eighteenth century until the Marxist coup in April 1978. During the reign by members of the Durrani confederation, members of its affiliated kinship groups held influential administrative, diplomatic, and military posts. With the nomination of Hamid Karzai as the leader of Afghanistan’s interim administration on 22 December 2001 and his subsequent (indirect) election during the Loya Jirga on 19 June 2002 as President of the Transitional Authority, a Durrani Pushtun of the Saddozai dynasty has again become the leader of Afghanistan.

Unlike the Durrani Pushtuns, the largest Pushtun group of the Ghilzais live throughout Afghanistan’s provinces without a clearly defined homeland (see Glatzer 1998:175). While the two confederations often vied for power, the Ghilzais only once gained supremacy to control large parts of Afghanistan just prior to the creation of the nation. However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, Afghanistan’s rulers such as Sher Ali Khan (1869-1879) and Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) for a short period placed predominantly Ghilzai Pushtun governors and administrators who were supportive of the royal family, in Badakhshan (Holzwarth 1990:85).

41 From 1747-1818 and 1839-1842—and now again from December 2001—most leaders in Afghanistan have been Durrani Pushtuns from one of the two Abdali groups of the Saddozai dynasty, that is members of the Popalzai and Barakzai sub-groups. In 1819, the Mohammadzai group from the Barakzai lineage, named after Amir Dost Mohammad, began to rule Afghanistan (which they did 1819-1839, 1842-1929 and 1930-1978). The period of the Musahiban rulers that began with Nadir Shah in 1929 after the nine months interregnum of the Tajik rebel Habibullah Kalakani, ended with Mohammad Daoud in 1978 and brought the Mohammadzai rule to an end.

42 Karzai is the head of the Popalzai lineage. This lineage originally emerged from the Saddozai dynasty (1747-1823) (see Colwill 2001; Klimburg 1966:111).

43 Mir Wais, a Kandahari Hotaki Ghilzai leader, rebelled against the dominant Safawid rulers in 1709. In 1722, he even dethroned the Shah of Persia and took the Safavid capital Isfahan in eastern Iran. By 1729, however, Ghilzai power had faded (see Aslanov et al. 1969:18-19; Dupree 1973:324; Glatzer 1998:174). In 1739, Nadir Shah, a Chagatai Turk and former slave of a Safavid claimant, entered Delhi and defeated the Moghul ruler Mohammad Shah (1719-1748) (see Dupree 1973:331). In 1740, with the assistance of some Abdali Pushtuns whom he had previously defeated, Nadir Shah eliminated Ghilzai power which consequently facilitated the rise of the Abdali Pushtuns in Kandahar (see Gregorian 1969:46). In 1747, Ahmad Khan Abdali, a Pushtun who previously was an ally of Nadir Shah, plotted against and killed him, thus starting the Durrani Pushtun rule in Afghanistan that lasted basically until 1978 (Gregorian 1969:46).

44 In an attempt to break up the powerful positions that were assumed by Ghilzai Pushtuns, the Afghan ruler Amir Abdur Rahman Khan from 1886-1889 also increasingly used Qizilbash for these political positions (see Holzwarth 1990:85). The Twelver Shiite Qizilbash were originally Persian mercenaries of Turkic origin in the Persian Safavid army who subsequently migrated to Afghanistan as mercenaries in Ahmad Shah Durrani’s army (see Gregorian 1969:36; Olesen...
Musahiban rulers who were descendants of Sultan Mohammad Khan, a brother of Amir (King) Dost Mohammad (see Chapter One, footnote 7) in 1978 by a Marxist coup, did Ghilzai Pushtuns gain recent prominence in Afghan politics. Not only did they dominate the Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq-e Afghanistan (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, henceforth PDPA) during Communist rule (1978-1992) but, three of the seven Peshawar-based mujahideen groups that were to decide on the first post-Communist administration, were led by Ghilzais and had strong Ghilzai memberships. Powerful Ghilzai organisations were Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an extremist Islamist from Kunduz, and leader of the Hezb-e Islami (Islamic Party), the slightly more moderate Islamist Mawlawi Younus Khalis from Nangarhar Province and his identically named Hezb-e Islami, as well as the Saudi-backed conservative Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf from Paghman near Kabul and his Ittehad-e Islami (Islamic Union) (see Roy 1995:24). The Taliban were also led by a Ghilzai Pushtun, Mullah Mohammad Omar, and their core Ghilzai members came from Omar’s stronghold in Kandahar.

Of all the ethnic associations in Afghanistan, the Pushtuns are most clearly able to trace their descent to the apical ancestor Qais Abdur Rashid (Tapper 1991:40). They are organised as relatively rigid clan organisations and adhere to pushtunwali, a code of conduct (see Glatzer 1977; Steu1 1981). Most Durrani and Ghilzai Pushtuns speak Pushto which is an east-Iranian sub-branch

1995:54). By the 19th century, the Afghan rulers became concerned about their Twelver Shiite beliefs and often connected the Qizilbash with their unpopular co-religionists, the Hazaras. Subsequently, Hindus temporarily were entrusted with important government positions (Olesen 1995:54) but were soon also mistrusted and were then increasingly replaced by Pushtuns from major tribes that were linked to the Durrani royal family (see Holzwarth 1990:86). In addition to Durrani administrators, gholam bacha (local youth who had been trained by the central rulers in Kabul to adopt the Pushtun manners of the Afghan rulers) were also installed (Holzwarth 1990:87).

45 In fact, three of the four main leaders during Afghanistan’s Communist period were Ghilzai Pushtuns: Nur Mohammad Taraki (1978-1979), Hafizullah Amin (1979) and Najibullah (1986-1992). The ethnic background of the fourth Communist leader, Babrak Karmal (1929-1996) remains unclear; his ethnicity may have been Tajik, Tajikised Pushtun, or alternatively, he may have been a descendent of a Kashmiri family living in Kabul (see Anwar 1989:276nl2; Rubin 1995:126).

46 The ‘emic’ concept of pushtunwali approximately translates as a Pushtun Weltanschauung that incorporates the totality of social norms and values and is embedded in genealogy, applying to a large heterogenous territory (Glatzer 1977:225). Willi Steul (1981:308) argues that this code is aimed at the “preservation and conservation of the society and for the behaviour patterns of the individual...the term...includes both the values of the society and the socially accepted behaviour patterns of the individual and the group derived from it.”
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of the Iranian branch of Indo-Iranian languages (see Kreutzmann 1996:390). Although most Pushtuns tend to live in southern and south-western Afghanistan, small pockets of Pushtuns whose ancestors were forcibly resettled by Amir Abdur Rahman at the end of the nineteenth century, live in northern Afghanistan, including Badakhshan (see Shahrani 1998:226n25). Many of these Pushtuns are bilingual and speak fluent Dari, whereas in other regions, there are Pushtuns who for various reasons cannot speak Pushto. The simplistic categorisation of Pushto-speakers as members of the Pushtun ethnic group is thus problematic.

The Pushtuns of Faizabad are often the descendants of public servants who had been employed during the period spanning the end of the nineteenth century to 1992. Many Pushtun families that were closely connected to the Afghan royal family were resettled to Faizabad during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman from the 1890s onwards (see Shahrani 1978a:18). In addition, from 1884, Amir Abdur Rahman also encouraged, or more often forced Durrani and particularly Ghilzai Pushtun peasant and nomad families from southern and western Afghanistan to resettle in northern Afghanistan, including the former region of Kataghan and Badakhshan (see Holzwarth 1990:80; Tapper 1983a). Between 1888 and 1900, after Abdur Rahman opened grazing pastures in the Lake Shiwa area north of Baharak to non-Tajik groups living outside of Badakhshan (see Map 3), the first non-Badakhshi nomads arrived each summer with their herds of sheep, goats, camels, and horses, to the high mountain pastures (Holzwarth 1990:81). Pushtun maldars or kuchis (pastoral nomads) were also

47 Pushtun communities are concentrated in the regions west and south-east of Kandahar and around Chaman. The Ghilzais predominantly inhabit the regions between Kandahar and Ghazni.

48 Mostly Pushtun pastoral nomads and peasants were resettled in northern Afghanistan (especially in Badghis, Faryab, Maimana, Jawzjan, Baghlan and Kunduz) (see Shahrani 1998:226n25). It was during this time that Pushtun nomads were given permission to graze in the high mountain pasture in the Lake Shiwa vicinity of Badakhshan. More recent forced resettlement occurred during the Taliban rule. Since their take-over of Kabul in 1996, Pushtuns were once again settled into formerly non-Pushtun areas (see Shahrani 1998:226). As the Taliban conquered a region they immediately appointed a Pushtun governor, but also sent male teachers and mullahs from other Taliban-controlled provinces so as to teach their brand of extremist, orthodox Sunni Islam.

49 Conrad Schetter (2001) emphasises this problem, “Pashtuns in Kabul, who insist on their Pashtun identity, often do not know a word of Pashtu, while ‘Tajiks’ in Jalalabad and Hazara in Ghazni do speak it”. In addition, it is not possible to generalise that all Pushtuns are Sunnis. For example, small Pushtun Shiite minority groups such as the Turi, live in Kabul and Kandahar as well as along the Afghan-Pakistani border region.

50 These nomads consisted of Ghilzai and Durrani Pushtuns, Pushto-speaking Moghol herders from Kunduz and Baghlan (see Schurmann 1962:403), and Tajik-speaking Arabs who
resettled in the former province of Kataghan and Badakhshan in the 1930s and 1940s. From the 1950s onwards, Pushtun communities also settled in Badakhshan's district centres such as in Baharak and Ishkashim (see Shahranı 1978a:18-19) with wealthy Pushtun immigrants from the south becoming shopkeepers in the urban centres. In addition, as infrastructure improved in the province, Pushtun traders of tea, salt and clothing, immigrated from southern regions of the Hindu Kush and penetrated beyond the district centres into its rural regions (see Shahranı 1978a:21).

The large Ghilzai population in Kunduz as well as in other areas of northern Afghanistan was of paramount significance during the Taliban rule, when it became the militia's main centre in the region. With the Taliban's advance into northern Afghanistan, the Ghilzais, who had for the most part been previously associated with Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, were the first group to switch allegiance. In fact, after the fall of Kunduz to the Taliban in 1998, Hezb-e Islami members in the western regions of Badakhshan near Keshem also briefly switched to the Taliban and only realigned themselves with the United Front when Ahmad Shah Massoud sent reinforcements.53

**Other ethnic groups**

During my research in 1998 and 1999, I was told of the existence of other much smaller ethnic groups, but unfortunately was unable personally to visit any of these communities. The information presented here is therefore largely based on the accounts of informants with support from archival sources. Small Baluch settlements predominantly comprised of agriculturalists are located in western Badakhshan near Keshem.54 Members of these communities have

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51 Some of these nomads were "Durranized" Ghilzai Pushtuns (Shahrani 1978a:18).

52 Some of these traders were also Tajiks from the regions south of the Hindu Kush, or Tajiks and or Uzbeks from Baharak, Jurm or Faizabad (see Shahranı 1978a:22).

53 Perhaps not surprisingly, Kunduz was one of the last Taliban territories to fall in November 2001, shortly before Kandahar fell to the soldiers of the United Front with the assistance of US troops.

54 In Afghanistan, Baluchis mostly live in Nimroz Province in south-western Afghanistan, as well as in smaller communities in Helmand, Farah, Herat, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Kabul, and Kandahar (see Orywal 1986a:34-35). The Tajiks and Uzbeks of Badakhshan refer to these people as Baluch.
assimilated and share their living spaces with Tajiks and Uzbeks. They no longer converse in Baluchi, but speak local Dari/Tajiki dialects. Politically, many of these groups around Keshem were affiliated with Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami party during the time of my research. In the Koran-e Munjan area of southern Badakhshan, a number of Nuristani families from the neighbouring province of Nuristan have settled mainly near communities dominated by Sevenere Shiite Ismailis (see Kussmaul 1965:14; Snoy 1965:111). The anthropologist Peter Snoy also commented on the presence of Gujar nomads from the Swat valley of Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province (see Snoy 1965:121), but I was unable to confirm their existence. Lastly, although the Persian-speaking Hazara are one of the largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan and primarily constitute the largest Shiite group (Dovazdah Imami or Ithna Ashari, that is Twelver Shiite Muslims), they are a minority in Badakhshan and often tend to refer to themselves as Tajiks (see Mousavi 1997:76).
Economy and Infrastructure

The climate of Badakhshan is extreme, corresponding directly to variations in altitude within the province. In the valleys of central and central-western Badakhshan, summer temperatures average around twenty degrees Celsius, but with approximately only one hundred frost-free days per year (see Grevemeyer 1982:11; Holzwarth 1990:16). Faizabad, Baharak and Keshem have intense spells of heat during summer, and cold winters. The higher altitude regions in the north, north-east and south-east endure long, harsh winters and are often snowed in from November until April. Throughout spring, the valleys of Keshem, Faizabad, Baharak, Jurm, and Warduj experience heavy rainfall leading to significant wash-outs of the main thoroughfare that often block access in all directions. This ample rainfall, however, allows unirrigated cultivation (zeraat-e lalmi) (see Holzwarth 1990:16), while further agriculture is made possible through the use of intricate irrigation systems (zeraat-e abi) fed by nearby rivers. In addition, small gardens (baghs) are maintained by families and villages.

Badakhshan’s provincial economy is almost entirely dependent upon subsistence agriculture. In addition to crops of wheat, rice, barley, and millet, the cultivation of opium poppies is also very common (see also Hayward 1995:6). In summer, potatoes and green, broad and kidney beans are available as is a variety of fruit grown in orchards: mulberry, apricot, peach, melon, pear, cherry, and pomegranate. Sunflower, sesame and rape seeds are used for the production of vegetable oil. The harvest of pistachios and almonds is still common, although since fuel is scarce, once abundant pistachio trees have disappeared at alarming rates near urban areas. In fact, due to Badakhshan’s economic isolation and the high cost of imported fuel resources, deforestation is rampant throughout the province. Moreover, during their resistance against the Communist regime (1978-1992), the mujahideen deforested many regions whose communities were perceived to be loyal to the government. These included the villages of the marginalised and largely unarmed Ismailis in the high mountain regions of the south, who were then often forced to abandon their homes (see von Moos and Huwyler 1983:136). At the same time, government troops logged entire forests close to their military bases out of fear that they may offer protection to invading mujahideen. Inevitably, these actions have had environmentally disastrous consequences. The muddy brown water of the Kokcha river during the snow-melting season, for example, is primarily due to the erosion of mountains and the frequency of landslides that are directly attributable to uncontrolled deforestation.
The grazing of livestock, especially sheep, goats and cows is common in both urban and mountain regions in Badakhshan when sufficient winter fodder is available. A herd is a valuable resource for many communities, supplying them with wool, milk, meat, and leather. Donkeys and horses are the main forms of transport throughout the province and due to a lack of machinery, oxen are still used as the main agricultural power. The hunting of native game, fishing and the collection of wild fruit and herbs also contribute to the local economy. Pre-1978, small local industries produced woollen and straw mats as well as leather products (see UNIDATA 1992:5). Natural resources such as salt and the semi-precious stone *lajvard* (*lapis lazuli*) continue to be mined.\(^{59}\) While there is still an abundance of lapis lazuli, Badakhshan’s most famous stone, the decrease in world market prices and the lack of fuel to run generators have meant that it is no longer mined extensively. However, the Massoud faction of the Jamiat-e Islami and the United Front both used lapis lazuli mines to finance their armed struggle initially against the Soviet-backed government, and then later against the Taliban militia. In 1986, Massoud claimed that taxes imposed on the mining of semi-precious stones constituted one third of his revenue (see Rubin 1995:236).

The geographical location of Badakhshan has facilitated its role as an important and much-frequented crossroads for international caravans travelling the Silk Road. Many caravans originated in China and traversed Badakhshan from the Wakhan in the north to Ishkashim, Zebak and then onwards via the Warduj valley to Baharak, Faizabad, Argu to Keshem in the west (see Map 3).\(^{60}\) From Faizabad, caravans had the option of travelling westwards to Keshem, Rostaq, Chah-ab, Taloqan, Khanabad, Kunduz, before eventually reaching Balkh (Mazar-e Sharif) (see Grevemeyer 1982:94; Raunig 1978:554).\(^{61}\) A second thoroughfare led from Baharak southwards to Munjan and then over the Anjuman Pass through the Panjshir Valley (Kapisa Province) before eventually reaching Kabul (see Maps 2 and 3 as well as Kussmaul

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59 Lapis Lazuli is mined predominantly in southern Badakhshan as well as to a lesser degree in Chile. Badakhshan’s most abundant mines are in Sar-e Sang, between Koran-e Munjan and Jurm (see Map 3).

60 In China, this ancient trade route branched into smaller sections: the southern route moved through the Tarim Oasis in contemporary Xinjiang via the towns of Niya, Khotan, Yarkand, and Kashgar to the Wakhan Corridor in Badakhshan (see Dupree 1973:301).

61 From Rostaq and Chah-ab it was then also possible to travel across the Amu Darya to Kulyab, in contemporary Tajikistan (see Grevemeyer 1982:94). From Kunduz, routes also connected with contemporary Tajikistan, whereas from Mazar-e Sharif it was possible to enter present Uzbekistan. At Khanabad, the Silk Route connected with Pul-e Khumri (contemporary Baghlan Province) and then led southwards to Kabul.
1965a:26). One has to bear in mind that the harsh and extreme weather conditions of this region made these particular sections of the Silk Road passable for only limited times of the year. Badakhshan's primary role in this trade route was as a distributor rather than a supplier of goods (see Grevemeyer 1982:101; Raunig 1978:554). Many old caravanserais (rest houses) continue to be used and thus testify to the continued popularity of this ancient trade route. Yet the Silk Road has not only been important for the trade of consumer goods; it has also been a vital means of transmitting cultural practices including those of aesthetic entertainment. Musicians, dancers and actors would have been especially popular at the major caravanserais and chaikhanas (teahouses), since their performances were not reliant upon local languages, but utilised the extra-linguistic media of music, dance and mime (see also Haussig 1988:108-109).

Towards the end of the seventeenth century the discovery of maritime routes between Europe and the East had a significant impact on the monopolistic position of Central Asia and Afghanistan as transit trade centres. These new routes proved to be safer, cheaper, and in many respects faster (see Gregorian 1969:21; Grevemeyer, 1982:102), their inevitable popularity thus contributing to the subsequent economic and cultural isolation of northern Afghanistan. The Bolshevik reconquest of Western Turkestan which followed the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Chinese Communist takeover of Muslim Eastern Turkestan in 1949, culminated in the closed border policies of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (henceforth USSR) and China in the 1920s and 1950s respectively. These trade and travel restrictions further impacted upon the peoples of Badakhshan, particularly merchant families who had been involved in long distance and cross-border trade (see Shahrani 1984:143). In 1924, the area of Badakhshan under the control of the Bokhara Amir was integrated into the former USSR, and later became the autonomous province of Gorno-Badakhshan in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (see Grevemeyer 1982:72). Yet even with Tajikistan's independence in December 1991, its borders with Afghan Badakhshan have remained closed and any trans-border trade remains illegal.

Since the early twentieth century, the illegal trade of high quality opium from Badakhshan's abundant poppy fields has markedly increased. In 1870-1880, opium was already being grown in the Pamir region of Sheghnan, but was

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62 See earlier footnote 5.
mainly used by local communities, including the court of Mir Yousef Ali Shah (see Holzwarth 1990:209, 220n5). However, just prior to World War 1, China’s enormous population of opium addicts created the lucrative opportunity of an opium export market. Bypassing Britain’s strictly controlled opium trade, Badakhshan quickly adapted its agricultural traditions and began to cultivate the labour-intensive poppy plant. By 1922 the opium poppy had become the province’s main crop with Xinjiang, for example, importing exclusively from Badakhshan (Holzwarth 1990:209-210). In recent years, particularly during the Rabbani Presidency (1992-2001), the cultivation of opium has dramatically escalated to become the main source of income for many farmers. Although officially prohibited by the Islamic State of Afghanistan under President Rabbani and also by the Governor of Badakhshan, there has been no effective means of enforcing bans in the poverty-stricken province, despite support from the UN. Importantly, the poppy plant is not only a vital source of income for many local communities, but has numerous useful by-products including animal fodder, vegetable oil and soap that are greatly valued by the impoverished population.

In fact, in 1998 and 1999, Badakhshan needed to import most essential goods such as additional grains, oil, salt, sugar, fuel, and medicines, as well as the luxury items of soap, batteries, soft drinks, and clothing. While oil and salt were available from neighbouring provinces, most other items originated in Iran and Pakistan and were smuggled via donkey or truck through Taliban territories to Taloqan (Takhar Province), Sar-e Pul (Baghlan Province) and then onwards to Faizabad. In addition, a small number of household and luxury items reached Badakhshan via the Topkhana/Shah Salim Pass during the summer months. However, these goods tended to be available only in the larger district centres of Keshem and Faizabad in the western mountain regions, and in Jurm and Baharak in the central basin. In comparison, the bazaars in the villages of the high mountain areas in south- and north-eastern Badakhshan were characterised by a marked scarcity of tea, sweets, fruit, and clothing.

63 Mir is a Tajik word for a local chief.
64 In 1907, China had an approximate population of 13.5 million opium addicts (see Holzwarth 1990:208).
65 During this period, Jurm established itself as a centre for Badakhshan’s opium production and trade.
66 The stem of the poppy plant, for example, is used as fuel; its ashes are utilised in soap production. The seed is extracted for oil production and used for cooking and the remaining seed pulps are fed to domestic animals (see Afghanaid 1995:Appendix Iii).
This economic and geographic isolation, together with its lack of natural resources, meant that Badakhshan occupied a peripheral political position during Afghanistan’s modern era (1950-1978). Even before the Marxist coup in 1978, Badakhshan was categorised by the UN as one of the poorest and most backward provinces of Afghanistan (see UNIDATA 1992:5). UN recommendations published in 1976 were never implemented (UNIDATA 1992:5) with the consequence that the levels of poverty in the province continued to escalate. These cycles of impoverishment are further perpetuated by the fact that approximately one third of the local population is landless (see Goodhand 2000:272). Moreover, throughout its history, Badakhshan has been prone to food shortages (see Goodhand 2000:268) and regular floods continue to erode precious arable land. During my field research, bartering continued to be a common practice as a consequence of scarce employment and irregular payment of salaries. In the bazaars, locally hand-made items such as traditional Badakhshi shoes, coats, caps, pottery, lapis lazuli jewellery, saddle goods, and urns were sold next to basic household goods imported from Pakistan and Iran.

With this virtual lack of cash flow, opium resin became a quasi-monetary unit, providing many impoverished farmers with immediate finances and often in hard currency. The limited employment options available for Badakhshi men in Badakhshan were to work with one of the few international NGOs, to serve as a soldier for one of the numerous military commanders belonging to various factions of the United Front, or alternatively to engage in the opium trade as a courier or farmer. Since the Islamic State of Afghanistan did not have a remotely viable economy, people became dependent upon whatever offered a means of cash revenue. Thus, a shift from the production of wheat to that of opium, from the trade of animals to the trade of drugs became characteristic of all levels of Badakhshi society in the last stages of Rabbani’s Presidency (see Goodhand 2000:277).

The harsh and often inhospitable living conditions of Badakhshan are further compounded by its poorly developed internal infrastructure. Major thoroughfares that were built during previous regimes dating back to President Daoud (1973-1978), deteriorated with the beginning of motorised trade over twenty years ago (see Raunig 1978:559, 572n14). Since neither the Islamic

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67 After a second major earthquake hit Badakhshan in May 1998, many international NGOs started to set up offices and programs throughout the province.
68 As a result of the widespread insecurity in Badakhshan, peasants were not able to sell livestock in Kabul or other large bazaars.
State of Afghanistan nor the local government had the means to allocate funds for roadworks, the main motorable transport artery (Keshem-Argu-Faizabad-Baharak-Warduj-Zebak-Ishkashim) was fragile and suitable only for all-wheel-powered vehicles and trucks. Whilst there was no telecommunication system during the time of my research in 1998 and 1999, several satellite phones existed in Faizabad and an old telephone line serviced a few government buildings as well as some NGO offices.\(^{69}\) Electricity was virtually non-existent.\(^{70}\) A diesel-powered generator in Faizabad's Shahr-e Kohna district operated very infrequently, while in Dasht-e Islam a somewhat more efficient diesel-generator more regularly supplied electricity to residences near the inner city.\(^{71}\) Whereas all NGOs used diesel-powered generators, no other settlements had access to public electricity. However, in Buz Dara in the Pamir region as well as in Bagh-e Zard in western Badakhshan, I saw some ingeniously designed generators comprised of parts stripped from Soviet military vehicles and driven by local irrigation canals.

In spite of its extreme isolation and poverty, Badakhshan has historically had one of the best provincial education systems available in Afghanistan. The province was well known for its Sunni religious institutions (see Shahrani 1984:152). Secular education for both girls and boys was also relatively well supported by national and provincial governments from the 1950s to 1990s.\(^{72}\) During my research, Sheghnan district in the north-east of the province was singled out by virtually all Badakhshi informants as a centre of learning and for producing some of the best male and female teachers of the province. Although

\(^{69}\) None of these phones were available for public use. The satellite phones were owned by international NGOs. Two European-funded NGOs that were active in Badakhshan (MERLIN and the NAC) received their first satellite telephone phones only after two major earthquakes had devastated large parts of western Badakhshan and adjoining areas in Takhar province in January and May 1998. Prior to those natural disasters, most international NGOs used radio communication systems which enabled contact within Badakhshan as well as with head offices in Peshawar, Pakistan. In 1998 the Rabbani leadership in Faizabad was thought to own a satellite phone. By 1999 many of the major United Front commanders had purchased satellite phones.

\(^{70}\) Prior to the Islamic State of Afghanistan taking office, limited electricity was available in Faizabad, Baharak and Ishkashim. A small hydro-energy plant was built in the late 1970s (see Grötzbach 1979:93), but was not in use during my research.

\(^{71}\) During one of my stays in Dasht-e Islam, the local council supplied relatively effective electricity that provided sufficient lighting for a whole evening. In comparison, over the course of several weeks in Faizabad, the public electricity was turned on only once, allowing for a brief golden glow of one of the globes in the guesthouse in which I was residing at the time.

\(^{72}\) The first modern school in Faizabad was established in the 1930s and around 1940 in other district centres (see Shahrani 1984:153). By 1974, Badakhshan already boasted 197 schools for boys and 27 schools for girls (Shahrani 1984:142).
physically remote, this town has a long history of education that may be attributable to the forcible relocation of the family members of Mir Yusuf Ali Shah to Kabul at the end of the nineteenth century (see Emadi 1998:109). It seems that some of these family members became gholam bachagan (slave boys) who upon returning to their home district, promoted ideas of modern education (see Shahrani 1984:147). In addition, from 1960 until the late 1980s, members of elite or wealthy landowning families in Badakhshan were sent to Kabul for further education after completing schooling in the province. Many of these early graduates returned as teachers or remained in Kabul as academics, intellectuals or bureaucrats (see Shahrani 1984:153-154). Chapter Four will discuss three educated urban Badakhshis: Mansur Hashimi, Tahir Badakhshi and Burhanuddin Rabbani, who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as critical players in Afghanistan’s nascent political movements.

During the Rabbani Presidency, many schools were assisted by international NGOs with the consequence that in 1994 the province was believed to have the highest rural literacy rate in Afghanistan (see Mokhtarzada 1994:8). Faizabad had four high schools for boys and two for girls, as well as a co-educational teachers’ college. However, schools were unable to provide resources such as books, paper, pencils, desks, or chairs. Whilst teachers were supposedly paid by the government, by 1994 the payment of their salaries was infrequent. In 1998, many teachers in district centres commented that they were rarely paid, and in rural areas, most teachers had not been paid for years. Nevertheless, in that same year, Badakhshan’s Ministry of Education claimed that the province had 156 primary schools, 62 intermediate, and 55 high schools. Significantly, in comparison with areas under the control of the Taliban, girls were not barred

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73 After Abdur Rahman Khan took Sheghnan in 1893, the Sheghni elite was thereafter required to send gholam bachagan to Kabul (see Emadi 1998:109). Abdur Rahman Khan saw this as a regional pacification program, intending that the slave boys would lose their Badakhshi identity and thus not pose a threat to central governance (see Shahrani 1998:234n38). Children from many aristocratic families throughout Afghanistan were sent to Kabul and eventually become an educated, forward-looking elite removed from their local traditions. Often the gholam bachagan would eventually return to their provinces as administrative officers (Holzwarth 1990:57-58).

74 The NGOs NAC and UNICEF have been especially supportive.

75 Member of local elite, 1998, Badakhshan.

76 According to Badakhshan’s Ministry of Education, the subjects taught consisted of arithmetic, trigonometry, geometry, physics, science, chemistry, biology, geography, history, carpentry, calligraphy, drawing, writing, religion, English, Pushto, Arabic, Dari, and sports. The sports that I observed were volleyball, buzkashi and wrestling. Some of the students competed at the annual equestrian and wrestling tournaments around nowruz, the Persian New Year (Personal communication with local informants in Faizabad in May 1998).
from receiving a basic school education. Prior to the emergence of the Taliban, students who wished to pursue higher level studies and whose parents had the resources to send them, would travel to Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif or Taloqan. After the Taliban’s take-over of Mazar-e Sharif in north-western Afghanistan in May 1997, male and female students were only able to pursue basic tertiary education in Takhar, which from 1997 was increasingly subjected to air strikes. Fearful of reprisals, students from territories held by the United Front were generally unwilling to pursue higher education. By 1998, the Taliban controlled all universities in Afghanistan.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s – at the end of the mujahideen resistance to the Soviet-backed Communist government and in the early stages of the Islamic State of Afghanistan – many areas controlled by conservative Islamist leaders experienced an upsurge in Islamic orthodoxy that became manifest in all aspects of society. The provincial library in Faizabad, for example, was closed since the reading of non-Islamic books was discouraged. In 1998, I observed the remnants of this once well-stocked library, its vast collection of books having been dumped on the floor of a locked, damp and dusty room in a building near the bazaar. Many of these books were historical or medical in nature and dated back to the times of Zahir Shah and Mohammad Daoud. All books containing visual images were riddled with bullet holes. However, in spite of restrictions on printed material, a local Dari newspaper called ‘Badakhshan’ continued to be published sporadically whilst it had sufficient supplies of paper and fuel to run the print machinery.

The retreat of Soviet forces in 1989 and the emergence of a conservative Islamic mujahideen leadership in Badakhshan also led to a considerable demise in the rights of women. In contrast to other provinces in Afghanistan, however, at the time of my research women were able to continue working as teachers,.

\[77\] Women were only permitted to do so if they were accommodated with relatives in these cities.

\[78\] The Taliban entered Mazar-e Sharif first briefly on 23 May 1997 after the defection of Abdul Malik, a major commander of Dostum’s Junbesh-e Melli party (National Islamic Movement), to the Taliban. Several days later, on 27 May, Malik returned to Dostum and the Taliban were pushed back (Maley 1998:11-12). On 8 August 1998, however, the Taliban succeeded in securing Mazar-e Sharif until they were ousted during the US-led military campaign against terrorists on 9 November 2001 (see Gannon 2001; Rashid 2000:72-73).

\[79\] The control of Taloqan by the Taliban in 1997 and 1998 was only short-lived and it was quickly re-taken by the United Front (see Davis 1998; IRNA 2000). Taloqan was under Taliban rule from 5/6 September 2000-11 November 2001, when it was liberated by the United Front with the assistance of the US-led alliance against Terrorism (see BBC 2000).
doctors and nurses. Nevertheless, even though both President Rabbani of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the provincial administration officially sanctioned such practices, orthodox mullahs in Faizabad often used the obligatory namaz-e jorne (Friday prayer) to call for changes in these policies.

In 1998, groups of women were able to walk to the bazaar, albeit fully concealed by green, blue or white burqas (garments that conceal the entire body of a woman from head-to-toe). According to a local informant, the wearing of the burqa in Badakhshan had been enforced with the inauguration of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in 1992 and had remained common etiquette even though most of the local population was in strict opposition to the Taliban. It seemed also that women were ‘willing’ to wear the burqa since it afforded them a degree of protection from commanders who upon sighting a woman, may have demanded to marry her. During my second visit to the province in 1999, an intensification of orthodox practices in Faizabad meant that women – even clothed in burqas – were seen infrequently outside of the compounds of their homes.

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This ethnography has highlighted Badakhshan’s tremendous diversity in terms of its ethnicities, languages, Islamic sects, and geographical regions. I have argued that the use of markers of identity in Afghanistan may often be problematic and thus should not be thought of as being fixed entities. Dari, which is spoken with a Badakhshi dialect, serves as the lingua franca for the province’s mostly multi-lingual inhabitants. The combination of its rugged topography, with an abundance of towering mountains that situates half of the province at an altitude of over 3000 metres, and the extremes in climate, has fostered a settlement pattern of small, isolated communities that share

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80 The province’s only hospital is located in Faizabad with several male and female doctors in attendance. In 1998 there were approximately twelve government health centres in Badakhshan. Like teachers, doctors were generally unpaid, relying upon their private practices and the sale of prescription medicines for income. Several NGOs (Swedish Afghanistan Committee, MERLIN) and UNICEF support the health system by funding basic salaries, but more commonly, medicines.

81 This was such a sensitive issue that on several occasions in 1998 Rabbani had to intervene so that local women as well as foreign women employed by NGOs could continue their work (Personal information with member of local elite).

82 At the level of the eyes a small net is inserted so as to allow for some orientation whilst walking.

83 Personal communication with male member of Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, 1998.
distinctive socio-cultural identities. The harsh climate and inhospitable terrain clearly connect each community closely to the unpredictable forces of nature. Not surprisingly therefore, throughout Badakhshan’s history the region has been isolated and inaccessible, although its high mountain passes, seasonally raging rivers and deep valley encarvements often served as political boundaries for many semi-autonomous princedoms and modern military commanders. Badakhshan’s remoteness from urban centres has meant that it did not share the benefits of the trends of modernisation that swept across Afghanistan in the 1960s and 1970s and consequently there has been a lack of any significant development. Indeed, the province has remained severely impoverished, based on a traditional subsistence agrarian society, and whose economic stagnation as well as limited employment opportunities have made it especially vulnerable to the labour intensive, yet highly profitable growing of opium poppies.

It is against this backdrop that the cultural practices I recorded in 1998 and 1999, and which were performed by Sunni Tajiks, Uzbeks and Pushtuns as well as Ismaili Tajiks, may be comprehended. Since cultural performances were restricted at that time for religious and/or political reasons, this ethnographic background is necessarily complemented by the ensuing discussion of Badakhshan’s political history.
The Political History of Badakhshan

Afghanistan stands at the threshold of a new – a democratic epoch...It is in the process of a profound shift into the ‘modern period’ and will therefore increasingly be exposed to internal crises and tensions (Klimburg 1966:7).\(^1\)

This statement by the Austrian ethnographer Max Klimburg, author of one of the first general monographs on Afghanistan, may easily have been made after the inauguration of Afghanistan’s interim administration in Kabul on 22 December 2001. Klimburg’s announcement of Afghanistan’s new era of modernity and democracy, however, was written nearly thirty-seven years ago, one year after Afghanistan was identified as a constitutional monarchy in 1964. Moreover, few would have anticipated that the internal tensions and crises which Klimburg saw as accompanying the path to modernity, would lead to a Marxist coup in 1978, decades of civil war, the rise of extremist Islam, and the eventual failure of Afghanistan as a political state. The Communist period had made the country vulnerable to outside forces, most importantly, that of Pakistan’s intelligence organisation, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), and Saudi Arabia, but also the United States and Iran. Almost half of Afghanistan’s financial aid originated from Saudi and other Arab sources. It seems now that these groups were primarily interested in promoting Wahhabism, a puritan Arabian Islamic reformist movement that is particularly anti-Shiite (see Chapter Five), and intentionally aimed to reduce the influence

\(^1\) I have translated this quote from the original German into English.
of traditional Afghan religious and cultural practices by financing those *mujahideen* groups who were prepared to adopt their extremist ideologies. The recipients of these financial and military benefits were Gulbuddin Hekmatyar from the Hezb-e Islami, Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf from Ittehad-e Islami as well as the leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar. The culmination of this foreign influence in Afghanistan was manifest in the Taliban militia’s close alliance with the Saudi Wahhabi-influenced extremist Islamist Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda (Military Base) terrorist network.

From 1998 to 2001, Badakhshan held the unique position as the only province in Afghanistan whose territories remained outside of the control of the Taliban. Nevertheless, in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999, the influence of ultra-conservative Arabian and Indian extremist Islamic reformist dogmas was evident in the prohibition of traditionally popular aesthetic and non-Sunni religious cultural performances. In order to explicate the complex relationship between the emergence of an Islamist society in Afghanistan and the patronage/prohibition of cultural practices in Badakhshan, I shall begin this chapter with an historical overview that situates the province in the larger social and political context of the nation of Afghanistan. I shall then specifically examine the circumstances that led firstly to the emergence of political Islam in Afghanistan, then later to the rise of extremist Islam that reached its zenith during the Taliban era (1996-2001). As will be argued in this and the following chapters, extremist Islam – albeit on a much smaller scale – was also manifest in some regions of Badakhshan. This had a significant impact on the expression of non-religious performances in the province.

**The Pre-, Early and Medieval Islamic Periods**

Badakhshan’s traditional epoch was dominated by the relative autonomy of Badakhshan’s rulers. Elected either externally or by Badakhshan’s elite, the rulers represented the interests of Badakhshan’s sphere of political influence who, despite the formal recognition of the suzerainty of external rulers, were able to govern relatively autonomously...As a result of conditions that generally affected all areas of governance in Central Asia, the boundaries of the territorial sovereignty, however, remained fluid...When viewed from the perspective of major sovereignties, Badakhshan was a dependency of their empires, whereas from the perspective of provincial historians (and their patrons, the [local Badakhshi] rulers), it was an independent empire whose tradition of rulers could be traced to their ancestor,
While the history of the territory now known as Badakhshan has been marked by an abundance of take-overs and wars, it has nevertheless tended to remain a fiercely autonomous territory that was often only nominally controlled by invading dynasties and rulers. A number of dynastic leaders or vassals of empires ruled over Badakhshan during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras.  While Badakhshan was first mentioned in seventh and eighth century Chinese documents, there is no clear record of the region's early period of Islamisation (Barthold et al. 1960:852). The powerful Mongol Genghis Khan whose influence extended throughout large parts of Central Asia and the Middle East, dominated the thirteenth century and his descendants, the Chagatai rulers, governed territories including Badakhshan but extending as far as parts of India and Turkey. From the fifteenth to eighteenth century, Badakhshan was largely seen as a dependency of larger empires such as that of the Moghuls as well as those which originated in East Turkestan, including Samarkand, Balkh, Kunduz, and the Chagatai-Mongols (see Barthold et al. 1960:852; Grevemeyer 1982:24). Yet local rulers and provincial historians of that era continued to regard the region as an independent territory (see Grevemeyer 1982:23).

The beginning of the sixteenth century marked the ascendancy of the Uzbek in Afghanistan and subsequent Uzbek/Moghul rivalries for the subjugation of Badakhshan. Huge Uzbek empires which were created in what is now contemporary northern Afghanistan, vied for control over the territory of

2 I have translated this passage from German into English.
3 During the pre-Islamic period, these included the Persian Achaemenid empire (600-400 BC), Graeco-Bactrian empire (400-200 BC), Kushan empire (100 BC-300 AD), Partian dynasty (249 BC-224 AD), and Sasanian empire (224-651) (see Dupree 1973:272-303; Gregorian 1969:13-14). The periods of external rule that followed the Arab invasion of 651-652 included the Abbassid (750-1258) and Samanid (819-1005), the Ghaznavid dynasty (977-1186), the Saljuqs (1038-1157), the Qurakhanids (992-1211), the Ghurids (1000-1215), and the Khwarzam Shahs (1200-1230). The Islamic periods or rule are well summarised in Gregorian (1969), Dupree (1973) and Ghaussy (1997).
4 Chagatai was Genghis Khan's second son. Dupree (1973:317) considers these Turkic and Mongol groups of this period to be the forefathers of contemporary Uzbeks. The successors of the Chagatai ruler Tamerlane (1370-1405) became known as the Timurids (1405-1506) (see Dupree 1973:317; Manz 1989).
5 The Moghuls claimed the western regions of Badakhshan with the then provincial capital Qala-e Zafar (near contemporary Keshem). Badakhshan's territories, however, were also claimed by the Chagatai-Mongols who are believed to have controlled the high mountain regions and possibly also parts of the central plateau in Badakhshan for at least twelve years during this period. Some regions in Badakhshan were ruled by the Mongols of Kashgar (see Grevemeyer 1982:32, 76-77).
Afghanistan not only with the Moghul empire in present southern Afghanistan (see Grevemeyer 1982:21), but also with a third major contestant, the Safawids (1502-1722), who dominated contemporary western Afghanistan (see Dupree 1973:321; Floor 1980:133). All three empires continually waged war against each other. From 1504-1647, however, Badakhshan was ruled predominantly by the Moghuls, although at the same time the region remained effectively governed by its local rulers, the Mir-e Shahs, who mostly resided in Faizabad. Despite an attempt by the fifth Moghul ruler, Mir Jahan (1628-

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4 Individual Uzbek tribes had not been effective as a political force until the end of the fifteenth century when Mohammad Shaybani united a number of Uzbek tribes against the Timurids and the Moghuls. The Uzbek dynasty had been ruled by three dynasties: the Shabanids (1500-1598/99), the Astrakhanids, also known as the Janids (1598/99-1741/1785), and the Mangits (1740/1785-1920) (see Grevemeyer 1982:44). The Uzbek Mohammad Shaybani briefly ruled over Badakhshan in 1505, but was unable to hold onto the province due to the opposition by the local elite. In 1507/1508, he was again defeated in Badakhshan (Grevemeyer 1982:46). With the take-over of Herat by Mohammad Shaybani in 1507, he officially became the successor of the Timurids and the founder of a new dynasty (Grevemeyer 1982:42).

7 Babur, the founder of the Moghul Dynasty, was a Chagatai descendent from Tamerlane on his father's side and Genghis Khan on his mother's side (see Ghausy 1997:24). In the sixteenth century, Badakhshan was ruled by Nasir Mirza (Babur's brother), Mirza Khan (Babur's paternal and maternal cousin and also a relative of the Badakhshi royal family), Humuyan (Babur's favourite son and future heir), Hindal (Humuyan's son), and Mirza Suleiman (the son of Mirza Khan). When Humuyan succeeded Babur as ruler of the Moghul empire in 1530, Kamran Mirza (Humuyan's rival-brother) and Mirza Suleiman constantly conquered and reconquered Badakhshan. The province was thus governed by a number of rulers for many interrupted brief periods. The assistance of foreign rulers (such as the Khan of Kashgar in 1529) was often sought by these two rivals in their quest to achieve rule, or to support the Badakhshi elite in securing their preferred Moghul ruler (for example Mirza Suleiman in 1545). In order to gain or re-gain control of Badakhshan, the rival Moghul rulers Kamran Khan (1546) and Mirza Suleiman (1549), as well as Badakhshan's elite, periodically sided or threatened to side with neighbouring enemies such as the Uzbeks or the Mongols of Kashgar. Mirza Suleiman's grandson Mirza Shahrukh was the last Moghul ruler during this period (see Grevemeyer 1982:32-41).

8 Historically, the Mir-e Shah was linked to the mirs (who were often related to the Mir-e Shah) via a relationship that may be characterised as "primum inter pares" ("first among equals") (Holzwarth 1980:192). The mirs ruled in princely mini-states, mostly as dependencies of the Mir-e Shah and in the peripheries of his spheres of influence (largely limited to central Badakhshan). They served as mediators between the interests of the local population in the villages and valleys, and the provincial government under the authority of the Mir-e Shah. The provincial government, in turn, was the intermediary between regional interests and the Afghan state (or previously with other empires). The settlements of Faizabad, Keshem, Jurm, and Baharak, and as well as Munjan in southern Badakhshan have at various times functioned as the bases for the rulers of Badakhshan (see Map 3). Following the destruction of Faizabad in 1827 by the ruler of Kunduz, the Uzbek Morad Beg (died 1838) (see Grevemeyer 1982:124; Wood 1841:162-163, 199), Jurm temporarily became Badakhshan's capital. Since the time of its reconstruction in the 1840s however, Faizabad has remained the provincial capital of Badakhshan (see Grevemeyer 1982:105; Grötzbach 1979:93).
1658) to wrestle Badakhshan from the increasing Uzbek domination, the territory remained effectively under the Uzbek khanate until possibly 1654.  

For 230 years (1657-1887), the entire province of the geographical region of Badakhshan, which at that time included the contemporary political territories of Gorno-Badakhshan in Takjikistan and Badakhshan in Afghanistan, was locally ruled by Amir (King) Yari Beg (1657-1707/1708) from Yaftal and his descendants who proudly claimed Alexander the Great as their ancestor (see Grevemeyer 1976:64; 1982:48). Even though this may be considered to be a time of independent Badakhshi rule, Amir Yari Beg had also nominally acknowledged the authority of the Uzbek government in Bokhara (Grevemeyer 1982:48). The Yarid rulers were mostly based in Faizabad and whilst their authority was generally recognised, it was most powerful in the central regions near their residence, while all other areas were governed by mirs or local aristocratic rulers. While the actual threat posed by the Uzbek empire was somewhat diminished during the rule of the Yarid dynasty, from the end of the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, rulers from the Uzbek khanate of Kunduz continued to initiate offensives against Badakhshan and ruled the territory for varying intervals.  

The Cloak of the Prophet Mohammad

It was during the time of the Yarid rulers, possibly in the period from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, that the khirqa-e mubarak (the cloak of the Prophet Mohammad) was situated in Faizabad and became an important political and religious symbol for the local populace. Indeed, the profound significance of the khirqa subsequently led to a confrontation between

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9 A khanate is a district under the governance of a khan or ruler.
10 Yari Beg, the Mir-e Shah of Badakhshan and founder of the Badakhshi Yarid dynasty, came from a religious family in Bokhara (see Grevemeyer 1976:64). He was a Naqshbandi Sufi pir (religious leader) and his territorial powers were limited mainly to Badakhshan’s central regions (Holzwarth 1980:104, 188).
11 They bore the titles of Amir, Mir, Shah, Mir-e Shah, or Mir-e Badakhshan.
12 The Uzbek khanate of Kunduz is sometimes also referred to as the Uzbek-Kataghan khanate (located in present Kunduz). Uzbek rulers of Badakhshan were Mahmud Bi (1698-1708), Qobad Khan (1767/1769-1792), and Morad Beg who achieved several brief periods of subjugation from 1821 onwards, but continuous rule from 1829-1838 (Grevemeyer 1982:52-54, 124). In 1829, after having finally conquered Badakhshan, Morad Beg totally destroyed the provincial capital Faizabad and resettled over 20,000 Badakhshi in the swamps of Kunduz (see Grevemeyer 1982:54). Jurm became the temporary capital until Faizabad was rebuilt.
Badakhshan's ruling elite and the newly established Afghan central government of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747-1773) who sought custodianship of the cloak as a means of legitimising his rule. Since the story surrounding the acquisition of the *khirqa* is relevant to the religious and political history of Badakhshan and is a continuing element of local cultural heritage, it deserves to be discussed here in some detail. In fact, according to local legend, one of Faizabad's public spaces, the *maidan-e sang-e mahr* (the grounds of the Stone Mahr), is the site from where the *khirqa-e mubarak* was once fraudulently removed from Badakhshan. This site is now the venue for the annual *nowruz* (Persian New Year) celebration during which several cultural performances (sport and entertainment) took place in 1998 (see Chapter Six).

There are a number of versions of the travels of the *khirqa*, several of which are cited by R. D. McChesney (1991:222-231). In one story, Wais Qarani was entrusted with the religious relic by Ali, the fourth Caliph, acting at the Prophet's behest. After Wais Qarani's death, the cloak was eventually moved to Baghdad by Shaikh Dust Mohammad, whose descendents later brought it to Bokhara. After eighty years, the *shaikhs* Agha Mohammad and Nazir Mohammad relocated the cloak to Balkh (present Mazar-e Sharif) where it remained for thirty-five years. On 12 August 1697, the *khirqa* was transported to a *khanaqa* (the place of worship of a Sufi brotherhood) in Jauz Gun (contemporary Faizabad, Badakhshan). It seems that the *khirqa* remained there until Shah Wali, the *wazir* (minister) and a relative of the Afghan king Ahmad Shah, took it to Kandahar in 1768 (see McChesney 1991:223-224).

Commenting on conflicting dates in the chronologies of the *khirqa*, McChesney (1991:224) also cites Mullah Sang Mohammad's *Tarikh-e Badakhshan* (Boldirev 1959), which describes the travels of the cloak as beginning in 1658. Sang Mohammad's account seems to indicate that the cloak had been transferred to Samarkand from where it was to be relocated to India by three *shaikhs* of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. While travelling through Badakhshan on their way towards the Dorah Pass to Chitral in present Pakistan, they were intercepted by Amir Yari Beg, Badakhshan's ruler and, like the *shaikhs*, also a descendent of an eminent Naqshbandi family from Samarkand. Yari Beg not only refused to allow the transit of the Prophet's cloak but confiscated the *khirqa* and built a mosque to house it (see Barthold et al. 1960:853; McChesney 1991:224-225). In this version of the story, the three

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13 A *shaikh* is a religious leader, and in this context may be understood as the leader of a Sufi order.
shaikhs were given honorary Islamic titles and *awqaf* (pious endowments in the form of property). Interestingly, one of the titles bestowed was an Ismaili term (*sahib al-dawat*) (see McChesney 1991:224-225), which possibly indicates a positive connection at that time between the dominant Sunni Hanafites and the Sevener Nizari Shiites who are now marginalized in Badakhshan. Subsequently, the town of Jauz Gun was renamed Faizabad which translates as “the abode of divine bounty, blessing and charity” (Adamec 1972:67).

In the apparently clearer account by Faiz Mohammad Kateb, the author of *Saraj al-tawarikh* (‘Torch of Histories’) (McChesney 1991:222-225), Shah Murad, the Amir of Bokhara, is believed to have offered the *khirqa* – which had been in Central Asia for the previous five hundred years – as a gift to Ahmad Shah Durrani when consolidating a treaty with him in 1768 (see also Adamec 1972:67; Gremmeyer 1982:66). This religious relic was then supposedly ‘relocated’ from Faizabad to Kandahar (see Adamec 1972:67; Lee 1996:91; McChesney 1991:225), although given the cloak’s exceptional religious and political significance, it seems unlikely that the local Badakhshi elite would have surrendered the *khirqa* readily. Questions therefore remain as to the circumstances of the removal of the *khirqa* from Faizabad.

A local version of the story, which I recorded in 1998, suggests that the *khirqa* was taken from Faizabad through an act of deception, and then only after stiff local resistance:

During a previous time, the cloak of the Prophet was bought to Faizabad. Ahmad Shah Durrani, Afghanistan’s first king, came to Badakhshan to collect the robe, but the local khan [ruler] refused. The Afghan king then sent a relative to fetch the robe. The relative, a prince, camped near the *buzkashi* ground [maidan-e sang-e mahr]. He promised the local Badakhshi ruler that he would never take the robe past an important stone, which was locally known as *sang-e mahr*. The prince [presumably Shah Wali] did not tell the local ruler that the stone would be first placed on one donkey that would then be followed by another donkey which was to carry the robe. This act of deception cleverly misled the locals. The mosque in Faizabad where the robe was once held still exists in Shahr-e Kohna, Faizabad’s Old City (Personal communication with member of local Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, April 1998).

The historical stone or *sang-e mahr* is located in the present Shahr-e Naw district of Faizabad, near the Kokcha River. The *khirqa* itself still remains in Kandahar where it served as a significant religious as well as political icon for the Taliban regime whose headquarters were located in that same city. In fact,

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14 *Awqaf* is the plural of the singular Arabic noun *waqf*.
15 The distinction between Sunni and Ismaili Muslims will be elaborated in Chapter Five.
in a manner reminiscent of Ahmad Shah Durrani, the Taliban leader Mullah Omar used the shroud as symbolic evidence of his legitimate authority (see Maley 1998:19) when on 4 April 1996, he appeared in public in Kandahar, holding aloft the khirqa-e mubarak – the first time in sixty years that an Afghan ruler had done so (see Rashid 2000:42). This clearly demonstrates the centrality of religious heritage to the legitimisation of political authority in Afghanistan.

Integration into the Afghan Nation

Ahmad Shah Durrani, the first ruler of the nation of Afghanistan from its inauguration in 1747 until 1773, twice gained control of Badakhshan, but without any enduring impact upon the region (Grevemeyer 1982:64-65). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, as the emerging Durrani Pushtun leaders curtailed the offensives of the Uzbek khanate of Kunduz, the Badakhshi mirs nominally accepted Durrani suzerainty. However, political alliances tended to be contingent upon the kinship of territorial rulers (see Holzwarth 1990:40), with the consequence that allegiances between Badakhshan and Kabul were often short-lived and alliances were frequently sought in other neighbouring territories by rival dynasties of mirs. By 1872/73, Afghanistan had become a buffer state, an active, strategic pawn in the Great Game between Tsarist Russian-Central Asia and British-India. The territory of Badakhshan was geographically wedged between these two empires. With an increase in taxes during the early reign of the Afghan Amir Sher Ali (1869-1879) when the majority of Badakhshan’s population was suffering severe economic hardship, a general mood of dissatisfaction arose and following his death in Mazar-e Sharif in 1879, a number of Badakhshan’s aristocratic elite successfully revolted against Afghan rule and proclaimed Mir Baba Khan as the ruler of the province (1879-1880) (see Holzwarth 1990:45). The return of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan from exile in Samarkand in early 1880, his assumption of the throne (1880-1901) and his subsequent subjugation of Badakhshan, however,

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16 Abdur Rahman was the grandson of Amir Dost Mohammad Khan (1819-1839, 1842-1863), the founder of the Durrani Mohammedzai rulers, and nephew of Amir Sher Ali Khan (1863-1866). The last major revolt against the Afghan rulers occurred when the Badakhshi Mir Alam Khan returned from exile in Bokhara and found support among various factionalised dynastic groups in Badakhshan, enabling him to become the Mir of Badakhshan from October 1880-March 1881. As previous local rulers had done before him, Mir Alam Khan paid only lip service to the Afghan Amir and ensured that Badakhshan’s population did not have to pay further taxes to the central government in Kabul (see Holzwarth 1990:48).
brought an end to the political feuds that had continued to prevail in this territory.

Abdur Rahman’s instigation of critical changes in Afghanistan’s domestic politics impacted upon the virtual autonomous rule of Badakhshan’s local mirs.\footnote{Abdur Rahman had hoped to recover former Afghan territories that were lost to the Uzbeks in Turkestan, and eventually to establish an independent emirate (empire) (see Kakar 1979:5). Soon after his accession to the throne on 31 July 1880, the British retreated following the end of the Second Anglo-Afghan war, while continuing to handle Afghanistan’s foreign affairs. The local Badakhshi elite, however, were disempowered and left with a marginal role in this new political system (see Grevemeyer 1982:173). The former local ruler of Badakhshan, Mir Baba Khan, together with Mir Mohammad Omar Khan, aligned himself with Abdur Rahman, and was thus briefly reinstated as Badakhshan’s main authority. As Abdur Rahman’s domestic policies and Pushtun chauvinism progressively disadvantaged Badakhshan’s population, Mir Baba Khan subsequently refused to succumb to Abdur Rahman’s taxing demands for contributions to the upkeep of his local military personnel. Soon after, in May 1880, Abdur Rahman found an opportunity to imprison Mir Baba for his betrayal and immediately installed Mir Mohammad Omar Khan as Hakem (Governor) of Badakhshan (see Holzwarth 1990:47).} His appointment of mostly non-Badakhshi Pushtuns, rather than members of the Yarid dynasty, as provincial governors and government officials (hakim, alaqadar), was an effective means of disempowering the Mir-e Shah as well as the mirs, and of thus undermining the traditional relationship between the local elite and the Afghan state.\footnote{The loss of the entitlements of the Badakhshan mirs is exemplified by a policy which led to the disarmament of the local population, while only Pushtun government employees were allowed to carry weapons (see Shahrani 1984a:148).} As a direct consequence of this reduction in the authority of the mirs, the relationship between the state and members of the land-owning rural elite (aqsaqal, arbab, malik) was strengthened, and these individuals came to act directly for the Afghan government, while remaining subordinate to local government officials.\footnote{Prior to 1921-1923, the position of government-appointed officials in Badakhshan was filled by the traditional aqsaqal (village/community leader, often an elder). After this period, from the reign of Amanullah (1919-1929) onwards, the task of government official was given to the non-Badakhshi alaqadar (Holzwarth 1990:99). For further details see Kakar (1979:64), Grevemeyer (1980:162), Holzwarth (1980:209-221; 1990:83-84, 97-102), Kussmaul (1965:81-84) and Shahrani (1984a:148). See glossary (Appendix One) for translations of the local terms.}

Abdur Rahman Khan’s provincial administrators were given virtually free reign, including the determination of tax collection. In addition, military personnel who were also mostly Pushtuns from other provinces, were stationed throughout Badakhshan and their upkeep was deemed to be the responsibility of the local population (see Holzwarth 1980:221-222). The brutal rule of this centrally appointed administration meant that many Badakhshi families escaped into exile to Kulyab (present southern Tajikistan), Yarkand

17 The loss of the entitlements of the Badakhshan mirs is exemplified by a policy which led to the disarmament of the local population, while only Pushtun government employees were allowed to carry weapons (see Shahrani 1984a:148).
(contemporary Xinjiang Province, China) and Hunza (present northern Pakistan) (Holzwarth 1990:49, 76). Those influential families who were unable to flee, were taken to Kabul. Leaders of gawm and village leaders were also imprisoned or even executed. By June 1886, 2000 members of Badakhshan's elite had been imprisoned and 1000 political prisoners had been executed (Holzwarth 1990:50).

With military and financial aid from Britain who was seeking a strategic ally in its quest for supremacy in the Great Game, Abdur Rahman successfully united Afghanistan into a centrally organised, although absolutist state. The securing of Afghanistan's international borders in 1873, 1879 and 1893/1895 represented the endpoint of Badakhshan's quasi-autonomous status and the territory was subsequently divided between Afghanistan and the principality of Bokhara, which at that time was a Russian protectorate (Barthold et al. 1960:853; Emadi 1998:109). As a result of the process of territorial demarcation effected by British, Russian-British and British-Afghan commissions (see Kakar 1979:64), ethnic and sectarian groups were artificially separated and communities with strong kinship ties were divided by designated borders. The Ismaili-inhabited Pamir region of Badakhshan, for example, was arbitrarily divided along the natural boundary of the Amu Darya between the Emirate of Bokhara (under Russian influence) and the Afghan state.

Abdur Rahman Khan was succeeded by his son Habibullah (1901-1919) who was born to a Badakhshi Wakhi slave girl from his harem (Kakar 1979:16). Habibullah was notable for his desire to distance himself somewhat from the

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20 The Granville-Gorchakov treaty of 1873 was signed at a time of chaotic revolts by various aristocratic factions in Badakhshan as a result of new taxes imposed in 1869 by the Badakhshi ruler Mahmud Shah, an ally of the Afghan Amir Sher Ali (1869-1879) (see Holzwarth 1990:41-42). As an outcome of the treaty of Gandamak in 1879, a large part of historical Badakhshan was assigned to Afghanistan (see Grevemeyer 1982:71). An earlier integration of Badakhshan into Afghanistan had been delayed by the second Anglo-Afghan war (1878-1880), during which time the British had occupied Kabul with the aim of installing their preferred leader Yaqub Khan (1879), whom they had ordered to sign the treaty of Gandamak to allow Afghanistan to become a British dependency (see Holzwarth 1990:44). In 1883, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan finalised Badakhshan's integration into the Afghanistan state (Grevemeyer 1982:23). In 1891/1892, Russia claimed the eastern Pamir regions, which was administered through a Russian officer by the oblast (administrative territory) of Fergana. Although the Soviets abolished the Emirate of Bokhara, Soviet rule did not become established in the Pamir regions north and east of the Amu Darya until 1925. In 1895, the Russian and Afghan border was permanently demarcated (see Barthold et al. 1960:853). Darwaz, at the northernmost tip of Badakhshan, became part of Afghanistan, whereas the regions of the upper Amu Darya (Darya-e Panj) became the border with the principality of Bokhara and thereby Russia.
harsh rule of his father by, for example, introducing a fairer system of taxation, and consequently, many Badakhshi families returned from exile. His successor Amanullah (1919-1929), however, while largely continuing and even expanding Habibullah’s reforms, was inspired by ideas of democracy and secularism and planned to initiate Afghanistan’s entry into the modern world.

His new constitution of 1923 promised equal rights to all ethnic and sectarian groups, yet outside the capital Kabul, little if anything changed (see Emadi 1998:110). In fact, with his increases in taxation following the cessation of British subsidies in 1919, Amanullah had alienated both peasants and Islamic clergy (see Holzwarth 1990:65).

The Badakhshi elite did not mount active resistance to Amanullah’s reformist rule since, to a large degree, they had re-established themselves as local political leaders and had improved their economic position through trade and agriculture. It is possible, however, that the re-emergence and strengthening of the traditional patron-client system of loyalties may have been a means by which the urban and rural elites throughout Afghanistan effectively opposed the program of modernisation (see Grevemeyer 1982:173-174). At the same time, Badakhshan had remained a conservative Islamic territory as was made clear during the brief reign in Kabul of the Tajik rebel Habibullah Kalakani in 1929, when Azimollah Khan, the Governor General of the Afghan province of Kataghan and Badakhshan, was one of the first provincial leaders to support Kalakani’s extremist Islamic policies (see Holzwarth 1990:65). Aiming to mobilise the disadvantaged and rural populace by offering them a better life that was based on adherence to ultra-orthodox Islamic values, Kalakani also advocated the abolition of unpopular taxes and promised the cancellation of outstanding arrears of revenue.

In October 1929, Mohammad Nadir Khan (a former Defence Minister of King Amanullah) overthrew Habibullah Kalakani and proclaimed himself King of Afghanistan (Dupree 1973:458-460). His political position was dominated by the desire to maintain international neutrality and to effectively withdraw from the modern world. After he was assassinated, his nineteen-year-old son, Zahir Shah, held the throne from November 1933 until July 1973 when he was

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21 Amanullah (1919-1929) was the first ruler to assume the title of Padshah (King) instead of Amir. Consequently, all leaders thereafter were referred to as Padshahs.

22 Nadir Khan had returned from exile in India and was supported by the British.
overthrown by his cousin, Sardar Mohammad Daoud (Maley 1997a:168). While the ruling Badakhshi Yarid dynasty had already collapsed by the end of the nineteenth century, its rural gentry remained politically powerful until approximately the second half of the twentieth century (Holzwarth 1990:192). Indeed, the comparatively peaceful period in Afghanistan from 1930 to the 1950s was largely the result of a relatively harmonious relationship between the state and the traditional elite (Olesen 1995:172). Centrally-funded projects in the former province of Kataghan (Baghlan, Takhar and Kunduz) led to the emergence of industry and concomitant improvements in infrastructure, agriculture and employment prospects. However, Badakhshan was excluded from these new developments. In fact, with the completion of a motorable road from Kabul to Kunduz and Pul-e Khumri (Baghlan Province), Badakhshan was further peripheralised and its bazaars, important centres during the caravan trade along the Silk Road until 1914, diminished (see Holzwarth 1990:226-227). During this period of selective modernisation in Afghanistan (late 1950s-late 1970s), little urbanisation or real improvements in agricultural methods and living conditions were evident in Badakhshan.

The Rise of the Urban Educated Elite

A paucity of literature exists about the province of Badakhshan from the time of the reign of Afghanistan’s last Musahiban rulers (1933-1978), throughout the Communist era (1978-1992) and under the Rabbani government (1992-2001). Certainly, in comparison with neighbouring Third World countries in the 1960s and 1970s, Afghanistan had a comparatively stable currency, a relatively well-functioning judicial system, ministries, a professional army, developing infrastructure, and tourism (see Glatzer 1997:12; Saikal and Maley 1991:19). Yet these signs of a developing modern society pertained mostly to the capital Kabul and to some larger provincial capitals such as Herat and Mazar-e Sharif, but definitely not to Badakhshan which remained a neglected, underdeveloped and impoverished province.

During the rule of King Zahir Shah and President Mohammad Daoud, the rural gentry continued to work effectively with the Afghan governors. Towards the end of this period (1950-1978), however, noticeable changes were evident in

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23 A sardar was a male member of one of the ruling Afghan clans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see McChesney 1991:323). See footnote 7, Chapter One, for further comments on the Musahiban rulers.
Afghanistan's once powerful Islamic establishments. Historically, the traditional *ulema* (religious scholars) who had studied in private *madrassas* (higher religious schools) within Afghanistan or abroad, and their rural support networks, had exclusively fulfilled the legal duties of administrators and ensured compliance with Hanafi jurisprudence. But from the 1950s, the authority of the *ulema* was challenged by a nascent circle of Islamic intellectuals, later known as Islamists, who had been educated in state-controlled religious institutions. From 1965 to 1971, the demands of these religious intellectuals became increasingly vocal, although they continued to remain a marginal group in Afghan society. The overthrow of the monarchy by Mohammad Daoud in 1973 temporarily ended the aspirations of this emerging Islamist movement (see Roy 1998:199-200; Saikal and Maley 1991:21-27) which was perceived to be the main opposition to the formation of a republic. Daoud had found support for the *coup* against the monarchy in the Parchamis (Banner), one of the rising pro-Soviet Communist parties (see Shahrani 1984b:41), and together with the Communist members in his cabinet, he proceeded to suppress his Islamic opponents, many of whom were from the Islamic clergy, and to impose bans on Islamist parties. As a consequence, most religious intellectuals were forced underground and many sought exile in Pakistan (see Shahrani 1984a:159). There, the Islamists politically organised themselves into the Jamiat-e-Islami and following a factional split, also into the Hezb-e Islami (see Roy 1995:43-44; 1998:200; Shahrani 1984a:158-159).

While the ideologies of these Islamist parties were not overtly extremist or radical in nature, due to a combination of factors which will be later elucidated, they were to impact seriously on the practice of cultural heritage in Badakhshan in the late 1990s.

A brief detour is necessary here to clarify the terms 'Islamic' and 'Islamist', both of which are relevant to an understanding of the emergence of political Islam and the rise of the *mujahideen* who themselves were "by no means ideologically homogenous" (Saikal and Maley 1991:62). In fact, the

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24 Mohammad Daoud, a cousin of King Zahir Shah and nephew of Nadir Shah, served as Prime Minister from 1953-1963 and had thus been absent from power for ten years prior to the coup (see Adamec 1991:163).

25 See Roy (1986) for an extensive summary of the history of Afghan Islamist movements.

26 Commonly, ultra-conservative Islamic movements are often termed 'fundamentalist' although a debate currently exists about the definition and meaning of this term (for an excellent summary see Maley 1998:17-20; Roy 1986:54; Saikal and Maley 1991:62-65). As a result of the term's wide and often inappropriate use, especially in the media, in most cases I shall use the terms 'extremist' or 'ultra-conservative' to describe radical Islamic ideals.
mujahideen were comprised of orthodox Sunni ‘Islamic’ clerics, Sunni and Shiite moderate and Sunni radical ‘Islamists’ as well as Wahhabis (see Roy 1995:43). Amin Saikal and William Maley (1991:63) categorise Sunni Muslims in Afghanistan into adherents of intellectual Islam (Islamism), Sufi Islam or village Islam, although it must be emphasised that these categories are neither static nor exclusive and that an individual may be influenced by elements of any or all of the three groups.

Intellectual Sunni Muslims were largely educated in state-controlled madrassas within Afghanistan but were also influenced by Egyptian and British Indian organisations that advocated the development of Islamism. This political movement may be understood as “a reaction by Muslims to the challenge of the Western models of state and development” ( Rubin 1995:86), with the aim of establishing an Islamic state based on Islamic jurisprudence. Afghanistan’s Islamists were opposed to the monarchy, Pushtun nationalism, foreign influence, communism, orthodox Sunni sectarian organisations (such as Deobandi), and traditionalist Islamic establishments like the ulema (see Adamec 1991:120; 1986:71; Roy 1995:20, 44). The Muslim Youth in Afghanistan which from 1978 assumed the name of Jamiat-e Islami (Islamic Society), was founded by Gholam Mohammad Niyazi, a Sunni Pushtun from Paktia Province (see Shahrani 1984a:158), and the Sunni Tajik Badakhshi, Burhanuddin Rabbani, both of whom had studied at the Al Azhar University in Cairo in the 1960s and were employees at the Faculty of Theology, Kabul University (see Roy 1995:20). In addition to Burhanuddin Rabbani, several men associated with Niyazi’s circle later became influential leaders during the jihad (Islamic resistance) and post-Communist rule: the Sunni Tajik Ahmad Shah Massoud from the Panjshir Valley, the Kharruti Ghilzai Pushtun Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf from Paghman near Kabul, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a

27 For example, these religious intellectuals were influenced by the works of the Egyptian Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) and disseminated translations of the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (died 1966) and the British Indian Abul Ala Maududi (died 1979), the founder of the Jamaat-e Islami in India (see Olesen 1995:228; Roy 1998:199).

28 The Muslim Youth in Afghanistan or Sazman-e Jawanan-e Musulman-e Afghanistan was also known by the Arabic name Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brothers) and many of its members had pursued religious postgraduate studies (see Olesen 1995:231; Roy 1986:70). Burhanuddin Rabbani attended the Abu Hanafi madrassa, a government-controlled madrassa in Paghman near Kabul and later received his higher education at the Al Azhar university in Cairo (1966-1968), where he was influenced by the Muslim Brothers. Upon his return to Afghanistan in 1968 (Adamec 1991:201), Rabbani taught as a lecturer at Kabul University in the Faculty of Theology.
Sunni Kharruti Ghilzai Pushtun from Imam Saheb in Kunduz.²⁹ The views of these key political figures were represented in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999 through the popular and generally more moderate Jamiat-e Islami (Rabbani, Massoud) as well as the less common, but nonetheless influential, more radical Islamist groups of Hezb-e Islami (Hekmatyar) and Ittehad-e Islami (Sayyaf).

While historically very active in Badakhshan through the association of the Yarid rulers with the Naqshbandi tariqa (Sufi order), Saikal and Maley’s second category of Muslims, the Sufis, were not as overtly political in the province as were Sufis such as Sebghatullah Mojadiddi’s Jabha-e Nejat-e Melli or Pir Sayyid Ahmad Gailani’s Mahaz-e Melli Islami, in other parts of Afghanistan. The third and largest group of Sunni Muslims in Afghanistan may be thought to have been influenced by traditional ‘Islamic’ values through either the ulema (religious elite) or ‘village Islam’. While the ulema have been educated in private or state-controlled madrassas, the majority of Afghans in rural areas have acquired their religious training at a maktab (primary religious school) from often poorly educated village mullahs (for further discussions on traditional Islam see Roy 1986:31-32, 44-50).

During the rule of Zahir Shah and Mohammad Daoud, religious intellectuals as well as urban, secularly-educated intellectuals who were attracted to the growing socialist movements, emerged in Badakhshan. Two members from Badakhshan’s socialist intelligentsia were particularly instrumental in the events leading to the Marxist coup in 1978 and the subsequent brief Marxist/Leninist rule (1978-1979): Mansur Hashimi from Junn, a Marxist-influenced member of the Khalq (Masses) faction of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan,³⁰ and the Sunni Tajik Tahir Badakhshi from Faizabad.

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²⁹ Massoud was educated at an elite secular school in Kabul and then studied engineering at the Kabul Polytechnic Institute. Sayyaf graduated from the same state-controlled madrassa as Rabbani, and later also went on to study at al Azhar University in Cairo. Following a secular high school education in Kunduz, Hekmatyar attended military school, after which he studied briefly at the Faculty of Engineering at Kabul University (see Rubin 1995:215).

³⁰ Anwar (1989:49, 277n3) describes Mansur Hashimi as being of Sunni Arab descent. Mansur Hashimi was sent to Kabul Teachers’ Training High School and then later studied at the Faculty of Science at Kabul University (see Shahrani 1984a:154). From 1955-1960 he received a scholarship to study physics at the American University in Beirut (Shahrani 1984a:155), while from 1963-1965 he attended Columbia University and completed a Master of Arts in Science Education. In the United States, Mansur Hashimi became friends with another Afghan, the Ghilzai Pushtun Hafizullah Amin, who was soon to become deputy Prime Minister, and then in 1979 President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (PDPA). In 1965, Hashimi joined the Khalq faction of the PDPA. Under the Taraki and Amin governments (April 1978-December 1979), Hashimi then became Minister of Water and Power (Shahrani 1984a:155-
the founder of the Setam-e Melli (Party Against National Oppression) (see also Dorronsoro 1992:6). 31

The ruling Khalq faction of Mansur Hashimi brutally enforced their highly unpopular reforms, suppressing critics and the Islamic clergy. Tahir Badakhshi’s Setam-e Melli was a novel anti-Pushtun movement that virtually pre-empted the ethnic divisions that eventually were to curtail Rabbani’s Presidency. Several non-Pushtun Badakhshis who were initially drawn to Marxist leaders later aligned themselves with Setam-e Melli purely on the grounds of its ethnic sentiments (see Roy 1986:106). However, the Badakhshi intellectual who played the most pivotal role in Afghanistan’s most recent history is the moderate Sunni Tajik Islamist and founder of the Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani from Yaftal near Faizabad (1984a:154-159). 32 As early as 1969, Rabbani had led a revolt against the provincial government in Badakhshan; by 1972 he became the founder of the Muslim Brothers in Afghanistan (Shahrani 1984a:158-159), 33 and by the late 1970s, he emerged as a leader who seemed able to unite the often-fractured

156). Shortly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 that installed Babrak Karmal as President, Mansur Hashimi was imprisoned and then killed.

31 Tahir Badakhshi was also sent to Kabul for further education and enrolled in Habibiah, one of Kabul’s prestigious secular high schools. Upon graduation, he studied Law and Political Science at Kabul University and became known as a social activist advocating the ideals of ethnic and regional identity (see Shahrani 1984a:156). In 1965, Tahir Badakhshi joined the PDPA and was one of the original members together with Babrak Karmal and Nur Mohammad Taraki (see Adamec 1991:42). After the split of the PDPA into Khalq and Parcham factions, he became a member of Babrak Karmal’s Parcham faction. Frustrated with the level of Pushtun dominance in both the Parcham and Khalq factions, he established his own party, the Maoist-influenced Setam-e Melli which sought to improve the living conditions of the rural peasants and to liberate minority groups from Pushtun “internal colonialism” (Shahrani 1984a:157). The Setam-e Melli was thus predominantly anti-central government and espoused a structure in which the provinces were to rule autonomously in a manner reflecting the social and political conditions that existed prior to Badakhshan’s integration into the Afghan state in 1883 (see earlier comments this chapter as well as Holzwarth 1980:177). Tahir Badakhshi later dissociated himself from both factions of the PDPA since he perceived the Soviets to be supporting Pushtun dominance in Afghanistan (Shahrani 1984a:156). During the latter part of Daoud’s Presidency (1973-1978), Setam-e Melli had gained considerable momentum in northern Afghanistan as well as in Kabul. In 1979, Tahir Badakhshi was killed under orders of President Hafizullah Amin.

32 Unlike Tahir Badakhshi and Mansur Hashimi, Rabbani was not sent to a secular high school in Kabul, but to a government-controlled madrassa (see footnote 28 and Shahrani 1984a:157).

33 It is interesting to note that the Wahhabi-influenced Sayyaf became the deputy during Rabbani’s leadership of the Muslim Brothers in the early 1970s, while the extremist Hekmatyar served as the secretary (see Roy 1986:73). These two mujahideen leaders will be discussed in more detail below. Another Badakhshi involved with the Muslim Brothers at Kabul University was Mohammad Omar, a Tajik from Faizabad who instigated a failed uprising in 1975 (see Dorronsoro 1992:6; Rubin 1995:292).
alliance of *mujahideen* groups, and later the factions within the anti-Taliban opposition of the United Front.


In April 1978, President Daoud’s instigation of the arrests of several leaders of the pro-Soviet People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan served as a trigger for the *coup d’état* on 27 April and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan headed by Nur Mohammad Taraki (see Rubin 1995:104-105). The overthrow of the Presidency of Daoud ended over 200 years of virtually uninterrupted rule by the Durrani Pashtuns (1747-1978). Yet while the policies of the Marxist/Leninist regimes of the Ghilzai Pashtuns Nur Mohammad Taraki and later Hafizullah Amin may have benefited some members of the secularly-educated urban middle classes, they were extremely unpopular among the traditional land owners and conservative clergy (see Emadi 1998:114; Grevemeyer 1982:182; Shahrani 1984:41). With Islam perceived to be a threat to the new government, in October 1978, Afghanistan’s Republican tri-coloured flag of black, red and green was radically replaced with a red flag that not only resembled those of the Soviet republics (Kamali 1985:31-32), but which significantly omitted the colour green, the symbol of Islam (Micheline Centlivres-Demont in Bourdieu 1990:40).

Land reforms that were intended to win over the rural peasantry strongly alienated Badakhshan’s land-owning and politically influential elite (see Holzwarth 1980:178). In Faizabad for example, land was not necessarily redistributed to the landless, but was often allocated to families who were close

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34 The *coup d’état* fell on the second month of the Afghan calendar *saur* (which overlaps with the Gregorian month of April) and for this reason is historically referred to as the Saur Revolution (although lacking popular support, it was not a genuine revolution). In 1967, the PDPA had split over issues relating to the abolition of the monarchy, resulting in the establishment of the more radical and anti-monarchic Khalq (Masses) faction under Nur Mohammad Taraki and the more moderate pro-Soviet Parcham (Flag) faction under Babrak Karmal. These groups reunited in 1976 (see Beattie 1984:184).

35 In September 1979, after serious internal power struggles, Nur Mohammad Taraki was replaced by Hafizullah Amin who adopted an even more uncompromising and radical style of leadership. Nur Mohammad Taraki was secretly murdered in October 1979.

36 In addition, the traditional symbols of an arch and culprit were also omitted from this new flag (Kamali 1985:32). The provisional constitution of Babrak Karmal, however, reinstated the three colours and emblems of the traditional flag, but not without the introduction of the new symbols of “a wheel and a five-tipped red star” (Kamali 1985:33).
to Communist leaders and who thereby furthered their actual power base within the province (see Roy 1986:91). Furthermore, Taraki’s regime completely ignored the traditional system of loyalties and reciprocities so common in rural Afghanistan and in which local representatives (often the rural elite) acted as intermediaries between the peasants and the state. In fact, the ‘Revolution from Above’ (see Halliday and Tanin 1998:1357-1359; Rubin 1995:115-121) instigated by the Taraki and Amin regimes was destined for failure due to the Communist leaders’ complete ignorance of existing societal conditions within Afghanistan and their lack of strategic implementation of reforms, which compounded the distinct absence of popular support for their rule. These political failings together with the Afghan Communist leadership’s limited assertions of Soviet notions of communism (Halliday and Tanin 1998:1360) led to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in December 1979, and the installation of Babrak Karmal (1979-1986), the leader of the Parcham faction of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, as President. It now seems likely that this intervention, in combination with the subsequent establishment of Soviet-style institutions, was envisaged as a means of enabling the Soviets to implement their models of social, political and economic reform albeit through the framework of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (see Rubin 1995:122-145).  

With improved infrastructure through the construction of an airport, hospitals and the expansion of schools, the Badakhshis experienced some tangible benefits during the Communist period. To a degree, non-Pushtun members of the middle classes as well as peasants also had greater opportunities for social advancement (see Giustozzi 2000:39-40) and urban, educated women in particular availed themselves of the forms of emancipation introduced primarily during the rule of Babrak Karmal (see Giustozzi 2000:20-24). Nevertheless, as the province was often able to meet only half its own food requirements, it was constantly dependent on Soviet cereal subsidies (see Goodhand 2000:268).

37 Given that this era was marked by the Cold War, the Soviet Union would have undoubtedly liked to secure a base in Afghanistan, an important geo-strategic territory whose two neighbours, Iran and Pakistan, were at that time aligned with the United States. In spite of Afghanistan’s status as a non-aligned country, it had secured generous Soviet economic investments during the reign of King Zahir Shah from the mid-1950s to 1973 as well as during the Presidency of Mohammad Daoud (1973-1978). These included humanitarian aid, the training of Afghan military personnel as well as the construction of ambitious forms of transport infrastructure (Rubinstein 1982:133-158). During the same period and in competition with Soviet development aid, Afghanistan also received substantial economic assistance although no military aid from the United States (Rubin 1995:65).
In spite of Babrak Karmal’s revocation of the unpopular land reforms that had been introduced by Nur Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, he was unable to diminish the groundswell of discontent that continued to rise from within the Islamic and Islamist domains. In Badakhshan, the earliest signs of dissatisfaction with the Khalq-led government, however, did not arise from the nascent Islamist groups, but from local members of Tahir Badakhshi’s Setam-e Melli who briefly took the military base in Baharak in April 1979 (see Shahrani 1984a:160). The lack of local support for this rebellion meant that it was quickly squashed by the army and after this incident, the government intensified its already brutal rule in the province, with widespread persecution of any potential critics of the government.38

In spite of this crackdown on opposition figures, anti-government rebellions continued and an Islamic resistance consisting of an alliance between the traditional ulema and numerous Islamist groups, many of which had established headquarters in Pakistan, began to emerge. In early 1979, members of the Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan re-established contact with Burhanuddin Rabbani in Peshawar with the intention of mobilising a jihad against the Communist government (see Emadi 1998:114; Shahrani 1984a:161). By June 1979, Badakhshi members of the Jamiat-e Islami with the assistance of some ulema and peasants organised some of the first major uprisings against the government, first in Koran in southern Badakhshan and then later in Jurm, central Badakhshan (see Map 3 and Shahrani 1984a:162). By the 1980s, ideological differences between the various Islamic (consisting largely of traditionalist ulema) and Islamist groups were put aside and an often tenuous but ultimately united resistance against the Soviet-backed Communist government was formed. The Communist government responded with increasing violence, but was only able to keep the mujahideen resistance under relative control with the military assistance of the Soviets (see Maley 1997a:168) towards whom the jihad had also been extended. In 1980, in order to maintain the government’s supply lines across the Amu Darya, Soviet troops were engaged in trying to crush pockets of mujahideen resistance in Badakhshan (see Roy 1986:119). By 1982, Soviet troops occupied Koran-e Munjan in southern Badakhshan to block the Munjan Pass to Pakistan that served as a supply route for the mujahideen (Roy 1986:187).

38 Shahrani cites the execution of approximately 3000 political prisoners by August 1980 (1984a:161).
With the failure of Babrak Karmal's attempts to reconcile opposition parties, he was replaced in May 1986 by Najibullah (see Maley 1997b:267). While Najibullah appeared to more genuinely adhere to Islamic values, his attempts at national reconciliation in which he proposed a cease-fire with the mujahideen, were rejected by leaders of the resistance groups (see Rubin 1995:146-147, 165-166). When the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev ordered the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan from May 1988 to February 1989, Najibullah struggled to maintain power. By December 1991, with the discontinuation of all Soviet aid, his regime suffered a crisis of legitimacy and internal fragmentation and on 16 April 1992, finally disintegrated (see Maley 2002:190). On 18 March 1992, while the forces of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Tajik commander from Panjshir, Kapisa Province, who was in charge of the Jamiat-e Islami's military operations, advanced towards Kabul and amidst pressure from the United Nations, Pakistan and the United States, Najibullah agreed to resign and to allow a transitional government to be formed (see Rubin 1995:268). In the meantime, the Hezb-e Islami had gathered support among the Khaqal and Parcham factions of the former Communist government. As a result, two mujahideen groups – Massoud's faction of the Jamiat-e Islami and Hekmatyar's Hezb-Islami – aimed to seize control of Kabul while the representatives of the interim administration vacillated over their leadership. In the chaos of March and April 1992, Badakhshan fell to the control of Jamiat-e Islami mujahideen (see Rubin 1995:274).

39 Najibullah was an early member of the Parcham faction of the PDPA and was instrumental in establishing and heading KhAD (Afghanistan's Intelligence Service).

40 Following a Loya Jirga that was convened by Najibullah, Afghanistan’s name was even changed from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to the old title of the Republic of Afghanistan in order to draw attention away from the government’s Communist ideology (see Rubin 1995:109).

41 Najibullah’s attempts failed despite changing the name of the PDPA to Hezb-e Watan (Fatherland Party) in June 1990 and further stressing Islamic values (see Rubin 1995:165-166).

42 The interim administration was to be elected during a shura (council) attended by all major Sunni and Shiite parties as well as Najibullah's government. Yet, this UN plan failed at the last minute when Rabbani and Mojadiddi demanded that only mujahideen parties be represented (see Rubin 1995:269). In Afghanistan, a rebellion of mostly non-Pushtun members of the Parcham faction who were loyal to former President Karmal and who resented Najibullah's Pushtun chauvinism, led to negotiations and alliances with northern non-Pushtun militia groups, such as the Uzbek Rashid Dostum and the Ismaili Sayyid Mansur Nadiri (a pir of the Ismailis of northern and central Afghanistan, but not of the Ismailis in Badakhshan) (see Rubin 1995:291). In this context, 'militia' pertains to “irregular or semi-regular formations, generally local or regional in character, semi-trained or not trained at all, subject to a less formal discipline than the regular armed forces" that were engaged during various times of the Communist period in a loose alliance between the government and the mujahideen (Giustozzi 2000:198, 213-224).
Whilst a large number of Sunni Islamic and Islamist-oriented resistance organisations as well as some Shiite Islamist groups were formed with the common goal of liberating Afghanistan, only seven American, Saudi and Pakistani-backed Sunni mujahideen parties that were based in Peshawar attended a number of shura (council of elders) meetings held in the late 1980s to propose the post-Communist administration. These parties belonged to Sunni Islamist groups that were led by religious intellectuals who were educated in state-controlled madrassas or secular schools (Jamiat-e Islami, Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad-e Islami), Sufi groups that were traditionally close to the Afghan rulers (Jabha-ye Melli Najat and Mahaz-e Melli Islami), as well as Islamic groups that were influential among Afghans exposed to village Islam and whose leaders were often ulema educated in state-controlled or public madrassas (Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami and Khalis’ Hezb-e Islami) (see Saikal and Maley 1991:65).

43 Both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had hoped to install either Hekmatyar or Sayyaf who were their preferred leaders of a future Afghan government (see Saikal and Maley 1991:122-125). In May 1987, the seven major Sunni mujahideen parties in Peshawar met as a shura to discuss an interim government. This shura, however, was unsuccessful due to differences between the participants over the election of leadership (see Olesen 1995:284, 290-291). In June 1988, a second, and slightly more successful, meeting took place that became known as the ‘Peshawar Alliance’. Ahmad Shah, a Wahhabi and deputy of Sayyaf’s Ittehad-e Islam, was elected as the leader of this proposed Afghan interim government (see Olesen 1995:291; Saikal and Maley 1991:124), whereas the other posts were divided among the other mujahideen groups. In the Rawalpindi shura in 1989, Mojaddidi (Jabha-ye Nejat-e Melli) emerged as the compromise-choice to lead the mujahideen interim administration, shura-e qiyadi (Leadership Council), with Sayyaf (Ittehad-e Islami) as the Prime Minister, Mohammad (Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami) as Defence Minister and Hekmatyar (Hezb-e Islami) as foreign minister. Surprisingly, Rabbani who had mustered significant support within Afghanistan was given only a minor portfolio – the Ministry for Reconstruction.

44 The Jamiat-e Islami (Islamic Society) was led by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani; Hezb-e Islami (Islamic Party) by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; Ittehad-e Islami (Islamic Alliance) by Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf from Paghman; Jabha-ye Melli Najat (National Liberation Front) was under the leadership of the Sunni Sebghatullah Mojaddidi, a member of a family of pirs who led most of the Sufi Naqshbandiya in Afghanistan. Mahaz-e Melli Islami (Islamic National Front) was directed by the Sunni Pir Sayyid Ahmad Galimi, the head of the Qadiriya Sufi order in Afghanistan; Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami (Islamic Revolutionary Movement) was led by the Sunni Mawlawi Mohammad Nabi Mohammad, from Logar, an ultra-conservative member of the ulema; Khalis’ Hezb-e Islami, an ultra-conservative splinter group of the even more radical Hezb-e Islami of Hekmatyar, was led by the Sunni Ghilzai Pushtun Mawlawi Younus Khalis, an alim from Nangarhar. Another major and more recent political party, the Hezb-e Wahdat (Party of Unity), a mostly Twelver Shiite party of ethnic Hazaras was formed in 1990 (see footnote 47 below). Only in June 1992 when Rabbani resumed the Presidency, were the Hezb-e Wahdat included as the eighth mujahideen party to be involved in determining the government (see Olesen 1995:292).
These categorisations of the *mujahideen* are somewhat problematic however, in that they imply a rather static and ideologically homogeneous alliance. Indeed, while Rabbani is a conservative religious intellectual, the Jamiat-e Islami functioned as a more moderate Islamist organisation which had its power base among the Tajik population of northern Afghanistan, but which also incorporated some Uzbeks and Pushtuns, especially in areas that had a coherent and effective *ulema*. In contrast, both Sayyaf and Hekmatyar were leaders of ultra-conservative and extremist Islamist groups. While Sayyaf, who like Rabbani had studied at a state *madrassa* and then at Cairo’s Al Azhar university, was patronised by Saudi Wahhabis, his beliefs had become firmly anchored in orthodox, almost puritanical Islam. 45 Hekmatyar’s Islamism was even more radical, reflecting his adherence to the teachings of the ultra-orthodox Syrian Hanbalite jurist Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328). 46 While both Sayyaf and Hekmatyar vehemently opposed Sufism, Hekmatyar also espoused the pronouncement of a *jihad* against unbelievers (Roy 1986:78). In fact, Hekmatyar’s party was probably the most extreme of all *mujahideen* groups, with many of its members joining the Taliban after the party’s collapse. Similarly, the Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami and Khalis’ Hezb-e Islami who drew their support from the Pushtun tribal areas in eastern Afghanistan were later to join the Taliban. A further ideological difference among the *mujahideen* was evident in the support for the monarchy by the Sufi leaders Sebghatullah Mojadiddi, who was also a conservative religious intellectual, and the more moderate Pir Sayyid Ahmad Gailani (Maley 2002:63). Moreover, in addition to the Sunni Islamist and Islamic groups, a number of Shiite parties which were largely led by clerics and were based in Quetta, Pakistan, were active in the Twelver Shiite-inhabited regions of Afghanistan, such as the Hazarajat in central Afghanistan. 47 However, in spite of this representation, Afghanistan’s

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45 Sayyaf is also a co-founder of the Jamiat-e Islami (see Goodson 2001:255; Saikal and Maley 1991:60-61). With the assistance of Saudi Wahhabis, Sayyaf established the Ittehad-e Islami in 1981, which served as the main point of entry into Afghanistan for foreign Arab *mujahideen* (see Rubin 1995:191, 221). He is a fervent supporter of Salafi Islam which disapproves of any deviation from the ‘pure’ interpretation of Islam and which in Badakhshan is known as a type of Wahhabism. Zardew, in south-eastern Badakhshan, for example, was a pocket of Wahhabi followers, many of whom were at times close to Sayyaf (Personal communication with member of local Badakhshi elite, June 1998). Chapter Five discusses Wahhabism in more detail.

46 For Ibn Taymiyya, a good Muslim was not defined by religious attitude but by a person’s political actions. As a result, it was possible to denounce a Muslim as a heretic for purely political reasons (see Roy 1986:78). The Taliban, as will be discussed later, seem to have also incorporated some of Ibn Taymiyya’s radical views.

47 The Shiite parties consisted of the Shura-e Ettefaq (led by Ayatullah Beheshiti), Szaman-e Nasr (led by Abdul Ali Mazari), Sepah-e Pasdaran (led by Mohammad Akbari), and the
sizeable Shiite sectarian communities felt mostly marginalised and excluded from the *shuras* and thus from the process of formation of the interim government. 48 This was certainly the case at the *shura* held in Rawalpindi from 10-24 February 1989 (Maley 2002:150), when the Shiites, unable to secure satisfactory representation, refused to participate (Maley 2002:178; Saikal and Maley 1991:123, 133n8).49

By the late 1980s, it was already apparent that foreign actors had overtly and covertly entered the political arena by supporting their preferred *mujahideen* groups financially, ideologically and logistically.50 Amidst the rising ethnic and sectarian tensions, the *shuras* were marked by the promotion of ultra-conservative elements, particularly as a consequence of the domination by the Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad-e Islami and despite the fact that these groups did not necessarily experience a high degree of support from within Afghanistan. Independent Saudi Wahhabi organisations, for example, financed those Sunni *mujahideen* groups that were inclined to follow their brand of puritan Islamic ideals and which were vehemently anti-Shiite. Although initially supporting the Jamiat-e Islami, due to its close relationship with Sayyaf’s Ittehad-e Islami, the Saudis later directed their support primarily to Sayyaf and Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami who also enjoyed the favour of Pakistan, as well as the support of

Harakat-e Islami (led by Asif Mohseni) (Maley 2002:64). These five groups amalgamated into the Hezb-e Wahdat in June 1990 and were initially led by Abdul Ali Mazari, and later, after his assassination in 1995 by the Taliban, by Abdul Karim Khalili (see Mousavi 1997:193, 195, 200-201).

48 It is impossible to give an exact figure of Twelver and Sevenner Shiites in Afghanistan. In response to their inadequate representation, five pro-Iranian Shiite *mujahideen* groups staged their own meetings in Iran (see Olesen 1995:291-292).

49 The representation of the participants at this meeting was therefore by no means an indication of the balance of the Sunni *mujahideen* groups.

50 With international funds, predominantly from the United States and Saudi Arabia, America’s Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) coordinated the purchase of arms from China, Egypt and Israel and transported the weapons into Pakistan, where they were then distributed by Pakistan’s ISI to the major *mujahideen* groups and Arab volunteers. From 1986, the US also directly supplied US-made Stinger missiles to the ISI for distribution (see Rubin 1995:196-201). Other countries were also involved in aiding the *mujahideen*. Members of the British Special Air Service trained some *mujahideen* groups, while a number of European and Asian countries supported the Islamic resistance by primarily offering medical assistance (see Maley 2002:81). Iran exclusively supported Afghan Shiite Islamist groups. The bulk of the international military aid and finances were distributed to Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami, the preferred *mujahideen* party of Pakistan, as well as Pakistani and Arab Islamist extremists. In fact, Hekmatyar even attracted assistance from Iraq and Libya (Rubin 1995:182). Various Saudi and Arab Wahhabi groups provided Sayyaf’s Ittehad-e Islami, the smallest *mujahideen* group in Afghanistan, with significant funds and weapons in disproportion to the other groups (Maley 2002).
various Arab Islamist groups (see Rubin 1995:214-215). Various Arab Islamist groups (see Rubin 1995:214-215). In addition to the financial and logistical support provided by these external players, both the Hezb-e Islami and Ittehad-Islami attracted many Arab mujahideen. Similarly, the Iranian government, in an effort to counterbalance the foreign support reaching Sunni groups, assisted several Shiite mujahideen parties and from 1990, supported the newly-formed Shiite Hezb-e Wahdat as well as the Jamiat-e Islami and the Sunni Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum's Junbesh-e Melli (National Islamic Movement) (see Giustozzi 2000:245; Rubin 1995:221-223). From 1995, the Taliban became the main recipients of Saudi financial aid (see Giustozzi 2000:245).

In Badakhshan, the moderately conservative Jamiat-e Islami was by far the most dominant party, especially in southern, central and north-eastern parts of the province. The radical Islamist parties led by Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar were also particularly influential with a number of local Badakhshi sub-commanders. In the otherwise predominantly Ismaili-inhabited region of Zardew in eastern Badakhshan, for example, a minority Sunni Pushtun community had embraced Wahhabism and was thought to be close to Sayyaf's Ittehad-e Islami. Sayyaf was to become one of the main Pushtun allies of the Rabbani Presidency (1992-2001) and the United Front, but his faction was not the only group in Badakhshan to promote Wahhabi ideologies. Mawlawi Kheyradmand from Argu, a conservative Sunni Uzbek commander who toward the end of 1998 briefly served as Governor of Badakhshan and who was aligned with Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami and later also with the United Front, was well-known for his leanings towards

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51 Pakistan's preference for the Pushtun Hekmatyar seemed to signal its fears of a predominantly ethnic Tajik leadership in a future Afghan government. The United States, by supporting Hekmatyar at Pakistan's dictates, played "a significant if inadvertent role in creating a monster" (Maley 1993:389).

52 Griffin (2001:131) states that over 20,000 Arabs participated in the jihad against the Soviet-backed Communist government; Milton Bearden (2002:24), the former CIA station chief in Pakistan from 1986 to 1989, estimates that up to 25,000 Arab volunteers may have been involved. Yet it seems that there were rarely more than 2000 Arabs in Afghanistan at any one time (Bearden cited in Kepel 2002:397n37).

53 Junbesh literally means movement, also within the sense of a social phenomenon. Originally from Jawzjan, Dostum was Commander of the 53rd Division under Najibullah's government and later became one of the major militia leaders controlling much of north-western Afghanistan.

54 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, August 1999. See also Delpho (1989:49).
Wahhabism. In addition, a number of Uzbek and Baluch commanders in western Badakhshan were loyal to Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, especially in and around Keshem and Argu as well as in Faizabad. The Sunni Baluch Badakhshi Bohadar, a conservative senior commander from Keshem, for example, was aligned with Hezb-e Islami and was loyal to President Rabbani's United Front during the time of my field research. As Chapter Five will further elaborate, the endorsement of ideologies of extremist Islam, most notably by the Taliban (1996-2001) but also by a number of mujahideen commanders in Badakhshan during the period of the Rabbani Presidency and the United Front, was to have serious consequences for the expression of Afghanistan's cultural heritage.


On 25 April 1992, Massoud entered Kabul with the assistance of Dostum's Junbesh-e Melli, the Shiite Hezb-e Wahdat as well as members of non-Pushtun Parchami factions within Najibullah's government. The signing of the Peshawar Accord the following day saw Sebghatullah Mojadiddi appointed as Acting President of the interim administration (shura-e intiqali), which was to be followed after two months by a four month Presidency by Rabbani, which became known as the shura-e qiyadi (Leadership Council) (see Maley 2002:197-199; Rubin 1995:271-274; Saikal 1998b:32-34). Massoud's control of Kabul together with the signing of the Peshawar Accord represented the

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55 Mawlawi Kheyradmand was governor of Badakhshan for the brief period of three months from the end of 1998 until his assassination in January 1999 (see Dorronsoro 1992).

56 After this transitional period, the shura was to select an interim government over a period of eighteen months after which general elections were planned (see Rubin 1995:271). Rabbani was initially to hold that position for four months but after some controversy arising from the fact that the assembly was dominated by his supporters, his Presidency was extended for a further eighteen months (see Goodson 2001:74; Saikal 1998b:33). After Rabbani's leadership was renewed for a further six months with the approval of the shura (shura-e ahl-e hal wa agd), he assumed his Presidency on January 1993 (see Maley 1993:388). On 7 March 1993, during the Islamabad Accord – and under considerable pressure from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia – an agreement was reluctantly reached that Rabbani could continue his eighteen month term, provided that Hekmatyar was given the portfolio of Prime Minister (see Goodson 2001:74; Maley 1993:388-389; Maley 2002:199). Hekmatyar, however, refused this post on the grounds that Massoud – his major enemy – would firstly have to relinquish his post as Defence Minister (see Saikal 1998a:118). In mid-1994, amidst further controversy, Rabbani again extended his presidency (see Saikal 1998b:38-39). On 12 August 1997, while the Taliban were seriously advancing into northern Afghanistan, Rabbani was again re-elected following a shura by the anti-Taliban alliance in Mazar-e Sharif (see Rashid 2000:229).
climactic end of Afghanistan’s Communist era (see Rubin 1995:269-271). On 28 April 1992, the Islamic State of Afghanistan was inaugurated, and Ahmad Shah Massoud was sworn in as Defence Minister (see Olesen 1995:292-293; Rubin 1995:271-272; Saikal 1998b:32). Yet the mujahideen parties were fragmented and tensions arising from ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, kinship, and personality differences had by then impacted on Afghanistan’s civil and political society. While Rabbani served as President in Kabul, every major group that had been claiming a stake in the Afghan leadership “both allied with and fought against every other major group at one time or another” (Khalilzad and Byman 2000:67). During this period, the adherence to ultra-conservative Islamic dogmas, including ultra-conservative Hanafi Islam, Indian reformist movements such as Deobandism, and puritan reformist sects that advocated Wahhabism, by a number of groups greatly impacted on the expression of popular non-religious cultural practices. These influences and their consequences will be dealt with more extensively in the following chapter.

The increasing rivalry between powerful non-Tajik commanders such as the Ghilzai Pushtun Hekmatyar and the Uzbek Rashid Dostum, seriously harmed the stability of Rabbani’s presidency (see Maley 1998:10). While Rabbani managed to extend his Presidency at the shura-e ahl-e hal wa aqd (Council of Supreme Popular Settlement) in December 1993 until 28 June 1994 (Maley 2002:198), the political landscape had further changed with the appearance of “embryonic regional states” in Herat, north-western Afghanistan and north-eastern Afghanistan (see Dorronsoro 1995:37), which only nominally supported Rabbani’s leadership in Kabul. Furthermore, on 1 January 1994,

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57 This is exemplified by the extraordinary situation in Kabul in June 1992, when the Jamiat-e Islami under Massoud controlled the north of Kabul, Hezb-e Wahdat mujahideen the west, Dostam’s Junbesh-e Melli soldiers “the area around the Bala Hisar fortress and Teppe Meranjan”, and Sayyaf’s Ittehad-e Islami fighters the Paghman area west of Kabul (Maley 2002:202).

58 From August 1992, Hekmatyar and his supporters were already officially countering the government in an attempt to fracture President Rabbani’s fragile alliance with Dostum and Sayyaf (see Saikal 1998b:33). Hekmatyar’s rocketing of Kabul on August 1992 alone, killed over 1000 civilians (Maley 2002:198).

59 It is also important to note that at that time, many of the mujahideen groups operated as militias that relied on territorial and/or sectarian support networks (Saikal 1998b:30). In the north-west of Afghanistan, the Uzbek Rashid Dostum had virtually created his own autonomous fiefdom. Likewise, the Tajik Ismail Khan ruled independently in Herat. The Hazaras had for the first time in the history of Afghanistan asserted themselves as political players and controlled the territories of central Afghanistan that surrounded Bamian. Hekmatyar’s domain lay just south and east of Kabul. Rabbani and Massoud therefore effectively only controlled Kabul and north-eastern Afghanistan (especially the provinces Badakhshan, Takhar, Kapisa, and Parwan).
the major non-Tajik commanders formed an alliance – the *shura-e hamahangi* (Council of Coordination) – consisting of Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami, Dostum’s Junbesh-e Melli, Mazari’s Hezb-e Wahdat, and even Mojadiddi’s Jabha-e Nejat-e Melli – which effectively destabilised the Rabbani government until February-March 1995 (see Maley 2002:203). By that time, the nascent Taliban militia had already taken control of Kandahar and were advancing towards Kabul via Hekmatyar’s headquarters that were located south of the capital. In mid-February 1995, Hekmatyar’s soldiers were thus forced to retreat from their base in order to avoid a confrontation with the Taliban. Indeed, Hekmatyar’s escape triggered a string of events that led the Islamic State of Afghanistan, through its Defence Minister Massoud, to take complete control of Kabul.60 As a consequence, March to October 1995 represent the first and only peaceful period of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in Kabul (Maley 2002:206). With the exception of this short-lived interval, the post-Communist aftermath of internecine fighting among Islamist groups meant that the Islamic State of Afghanistan became a failed state and remained so until November 2001.

When Burhanuddin Rabbani first assumed the post of President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in June 1992, he became the second non-Pushtun ruler after Habibullah Kalakani, but the first Badakhshi leader to govern Afghanistan. In Badakhshan, the provincial government’s administrative positions were almost exclusively filled by Sunni Islamist Tajiks or Uzbeks who were educated in urban state-*madrassas* or secular schools and who had gained prominence as *mujahideen* during the *jihad* with either Rabbani’s Faizabad *shura* or Massoud’s *shura-e nazar-e shomali* (Supervisory Council of the North). This social and political advancement of *mujahideen* through the system of *jabha* (the military structure of the *mujahideen*) thereby effectively altered the traditional hierarchical power structure of Afghan society and the influence of the elite or wealthy land-owning families (see Roy 1995:14).61

60 After Hekmatyar’s retreat from his headquarters near Kabul, Massoud was in a position to effectively bomb Hezb-e Wahdat forces in western Kabul. Hezb-e Wahdat, in turn, saw it necessary to enter an alliance with the Taliban so as to retaliate against Massoud’s forces. Yet the Hezb-e Wahdat’s alliance with the Taliban backfired, allowing Massoud to expel the Taliban from Kabul. With the assistance of Sayyaf’s *Ittehad-e Islami*, Massoud exercised military control over the capital, with the result that Dostum’s forces also left Kabul. For a more detailed account of these events see Maley (2002:203-204).

61 The system of *jabha* functioned through the creation of core units where military training was offered. It was possible to become a member without having to rely on the traditional *qawm* network (see Roy 1995:73-74). This was best exemplified by the establishment of Massoud’s *shura-e nazar-e shomali* (Supervisory Council of the North) and special military
At the same time, other commanders who did not belong or did not adhere to this Islamist network, largely adopted what became known by the neologism *qanun-e kalashnikov* (Law of the Kalashnikov) or *qanun-e jang* (Rule of War), which further perpetuated the transformation of Afghanistan’s culture into a *farhang-e jang* (Culture of War). The abundance of weapons that had been supplied by outside actors to the *mujahideen* during the *jihad* and which had often remained in the possession of a *qamandan* (field commander), meant that many local commanders were able to advance militarily to positions of authority, even more so if they had loyal men at their disposal. In fact, regional commanders who were loyal to either Massoud or Rabbani generally had little, if any, control over these renegade local commanders in Badakhshan.

The combination of unsettled feuds and the ready availability of arms in Badakhshan resulted in retribution killings against former members of the Communist regimes. This meant that musicians were also targeted. Indeed, the political fragmentation among *mujahideen* groups at a national level was evident also in Badakhshan. While his supporters controlled most of Faizabad, Rabbani had an uneasy relationship with Hezb-e Islami commanders in the western and northern parts of the province as well as with commanders who were pro-Sayyaf in eastern Badakhshan. To complicate matters further, political loyalties tended to be unstable, with personal rivalries and/or financial incentives potentially inducing a commander to switch allegiance to his former opposition.

The emphasis on adherence to conservative Islam which represented the only real common ground among the various *mujahideen* groups, inevitably impacted upon prevailing attitudes towards non-religious cultural practices. With the inauguration of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, Sharia (Islamic) law was promoted as the only acceptable code of conduct. Indeed, one of the first edicts was to order women to wear the *shalwar qamiz* (traditional clothing of a long shirt and baggy trousers) and the *chadri* (veil) (see Olesen 1995:294-295). Such policies reflected the significant influence of extremist Islamists, namely Hekmatyar and Sayyaf, both of whom had many Arab *mujahideen* in their political organisations, and whose views Rabbani was compelled to

units such as the *zarbati*, a force that had special striking capabilities and which trained elite soldiers who were later to be instrumental in the overthrow of the Taliban militia (see Rohde 2001; Rubin 1995:235). However, Massoud’s military structure never challenged the traditional structures at the village level (see Roy 1995:74).

62 During the Communist period, women in Kabul were not required to be veiled in public and were in fact free to dress in typical Western fashion.
accommodate in order to maintain political power. The introduction of extremist Arab Islamic practices into Afghanistan, in particular, aimed to “oppose both cultural traditions (tribalism) and religious ones (Hanafism, Sufism)” (Roy 1995:86), and thus had profound consequences for grassroots Afghan heritage. To further complicate matters, for most of Rabbani’s Presidency from 1992-1996, Kabul itself was in virtual chaos, having been divided between rival mujahideen factions of the ruling coalition. It was under these circumstances that in 1994 an even more extremist Islamic movement – the Taliban – emerged in Pushtun dominated areas in south-eastern Afghanistan and with the blessing of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, to fill the political vacuum that had arisen from the state of quasi-anarchy and internecine fighting.

The Political Engagement of the Ismailis

The Ismailis of Badakhshan constitute Afghanistan’s largest community of Sevenner Shiite Muslims of the Nizari branch. While their religious ideology will be presented in detail in Chapter Five, their political affiliations are particularly relevant to this thesis given that the majority of the aesthetic practices I witnessed in Badakhshan were performed by Ismailis. Historically, this minority group of Badakhshis has been marginalised and subjected to political and social discrimination by Sunni Tajiks, Uzbeks and Pushtuns. From the late nineteenth century until 1978, Afghanistan’s national governments used local influential middle classes as administrative ‘go-betweens’ in order to implement successfully domestic policies such as the collection of state taxes. While this worked relatively well for Badakhshan’s Sunni population, it meant major changes for the Ismaili pirs (religious leaders), who had traditionally enjoyed large influence over the province’s Ismaili communities. These local rulers were excluded from central politics and their role was curtailed to that of mediating between their communities and the often Pushtun government administrators (see Emadi 1998:110).

As many of Badakhshan’s Ismaili communities are located near the Amu Darya, they were able to witness at first-hand the visible advantages of socialism – the development of infrastructure, hospitals, sealed roads, motorised vehicles, and electricity – in neighbouring Gorno-Badakhshan in the former Soviet Socialist Republic of Tajikistan, while at the same time being apprehensive about their proximity to the Soviet power. In the 1980s, Afghanistan’s Communist government signed a contract with the Soviet Tajik
government which allowed one Ismaili community, Sheghnan, to receive free electricity from neighbouring Khorog, the provincial capital of Gorno-Badakhshan. Given the long-standing impoverishment of the province of Badakhshan, it was not surprising that during my field research in the latter period of the Rabbani government, many Ismailis commented on the superior living conditions of their co-religionists across the border.

The Communist parties’ promise of empowerment for marginal groups in Afghanistan represented a window of opportunity for disillusioned Ismailis who sought to improve their social status and conditions (Emadi 1998:111). Consequently, many Ismailis joined the reformist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, and then later either the Parcham and Khalq factions, as well as Setam-e Melli and the Maoist Shula-ye Jawid (Eternal Flame). Due to their loyal support for the Communist regime, numerous Ismailis were rewarded with influential positions, while others were given the opportunity to study abroad at universities in the Soviet block. Certainly, orthodox Sunni Tajiks and Uzbeks, as well as Sunni mujahideen, were even further alienated and their rebellion against the government fuelled by the appointment of an Ismaili from Sheghnan, Amirbeg Jawan, as Governor of Badakhshan during the Taraki-Amin period (see Emadi 1998:114). At the same time, however, other groups of Ismailis refrained from politics and continued to follow their local pirs and shahs. Perhaps not surprisingly, few Ismailis joined the mujahideen.

After the fall of the Najibullah Communist government in 1992, most Ismailis became aligned with the Jamiat-e Islami and in fact, this allowed some Ismailis to bypass the traditional hierarchical mechanisms of power and to improve their status through either the jabha or zarbati systems. Following Tajikistan’s independence in 1991, the spiritual leader of the Sevener Shiite Ismailis, the Aga Khan, visited and supported a number of humanitarian projects in Gorno-Badakhshan and on 27 September 1998, he travelled to the Afghanistan/Tajikistan border near Ishkashim. This was the first time that the Ismailis of Badakhshan had the chance to see and hear their spiritual leader, even though they were physically separated from him by the Amu Darya.


\[64\] Other Ismailis also received influential political positions such as Khushnazar Pamirzad who became Governor of Jawzjan Province (see Emadi 1998:114).

\[65\] Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Badakhshan, July 1999.
The Taliban Period (1996-2001)

The Taliban, a predominantly Pashtun, anti-modernist and extremist Sunni Islamic militia, was formed in the summer of 1994 in the context of pervasive despondency and discontent amongst civilians after more than two years of civil war and intra-mujahideen fighting. The movement was founded by Mullah Mohammad Omar, a Hotaki Ghilzai Pashtun from Kandahar who is believed to have been associated either with Harakat-e Inqilab or Khalis’ Hezb-e Islami during the jihad (see Goodson 2001:116; Marsden 1998:44). However, there is mounting evidence that the Taliban were at least partly a creation of Pakistan (see Maley 2002:219-220). Its members included religious students from eastern Afghanistan’s rural madrassas and from conservative and often Deobandi-influenced madrassas in Pakistan. Further, many of the mujahideen who joined the Taliban were former members of mujahideen parties that were close to the traditional ulema and/or village Islam. These groups included Mawlawi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi’s Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami and Mawlawi Mohammad Younus Khalis’ Hezb-e Islami, but later also Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami (see earlier discussion this chapter as well as Goodson 2001:81; Griffin 2001:35).

The Taliban seized the cities of Kandahar in 1994, Herat in 1995 and ultimately, the capital, Kabul in September 1996 (see Maley 1997a:175), wresting more than fifty percent of Afghanistan from the control of President Rabbani. Anthony Davis (1998b:43-44) suggests that this rapid military success could only have been possible with the active logistical support of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate. Whilst initially perceived to be a genuine and devoutly Sunni Islamic reformist force, the Taliban soon became notable for their imposition of an extremist hardline regime and their implementation of highly controversial policies that were allegedly based on Sharia law. As will become clear in later chapters of this thesis, these extremist principles seriously impacted on performance practices in Afghanistan, even in

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66 Taliban is the Persian plural of the Arabic singular noun for religious student, talib. Many of these religious students were Afghan orphans who had received free board and Islamic education in Pakistan and were organised as a “militarised force with a proper name, in Pushto Da Afghanistano da Talibano Islami Tahrik” (The Islamic Movement of Taliban) (Maley 2002:218).

67 Many of these madrassas continue to be affiliated with the Pakistani extremist Islamist political party, Jamiat-e Ulema-e Islam (Society of Muslim Ulema), a conservative Deobandi-influenced Islamist organisation (see Maley 1998:14). Chapter Five will further comment on Deobandi madrassas.
the province of Badakhshan which was controlled by the anti-Taliban United Front.

In 1996, at a gathering of Sunni ulema, Mullah Omar was officially proclaimed ‘His Eminence Amir al-Momineen’ (Commander of the Faithful) and on 4 April that year, he appeared publicly in Kandahar (Maley 1997a:177; Marsden 1998:65; Rashid 2000:42, 102), holding aloft the khirqa-e mubarak. If the change in Afghanistan’s flag during the Communist period was extreme, then the Taliban’s introduction of a white flag inscribed with black calligraphy – and without any images – was particularly radical. This new flag clearly signalled the ideology of the new regime: a departure from the earlier Islamist period of Rabbani and the mujahideen and the introduction of puritan, orthodox Islam that was ostensibly based on the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad in the seventh century.

Although the primary concern of the Taliban in 1996 was to eliminate Massoud, their advance into northern Afghanistan was also hindered by Dostum’s Junbesh-e Melli. On 13 June 1997, an anti-Taliban opposition was formed that became known as Jabha-e Muttahid-e Islami-e Melli bara-ye Nijat-e Afghanistan (United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan), and which was most commonly referred to as the United Front (see Fielden and Goodhand 2001:13; Rashid 2000:61). Mazar-e Sharif was initially planned as the ‘capital-in-exile’ for the Islamic State of Afghanistan as well as the headquarters for the United Front but this was not to eventuate as the city was soon captured by the Taliban. Consequently, the government of

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68 See earlier section of this chapter for the history of the Mohammad’s cloak and its importance to the people of Badakhshan.
69 Initially, Dostum had remained relatively neutral during the Taliban’s battle against Rabbani, and controlled seven north-western provinces (CNN 1996). On 1 January 1994, Dostum joined the shura-e hamahangi (Council of Coordination) that attempted to stage a coup against the Rabbani government by bringing Hekmatyar, Dostum and the Hezb-e Wahdat into an alliance (see Maley 2002:203). This brief coalition was narrowly defeated by Massoud with the result that Dostum’s forces were ejected from Kabul by June 1994.
70 This new alliance was comprised of the Rabbani and Massoud factions of the Jamiat-e Islami together with their Pashtun ally Sayyaf and various local Hezb-e Islami commanders who were nominally aligned with the Rabbani government, as well as forces from Dostum’s Junbesh-e Melli and the Shiite Hezb-e Wahdat. The Western media often referred to the United Front as the Northern Alliance.
71 A conflict between Rashid Dostum and Abdul Malik Pahlawan, one of his main commanders, that had arisen following the suspected murder at Dostum’s instigation of one of Malik’s brothers, led to Malik’s four day defection to the Taliban in May 1997 (see Goodson 2001:78; HRW 2001:16). As the Taliban tried to disarm troops loyal to Malik in Mazar-e-Sharif, he once again switched sides, resulting in the Taliban’s second major military setback.
the Islamic State of Afghanistan was relocated to Taloqan, Takhar’s provincial capital, until its first fall to the Taliban in August 1998, after which Faizabad in Badakhshan permanently became the defacto capital until 13 November 2001 when the United Front with the assistance of United States’ troops re-captured Kabul (see BBC 2001). The province of Badakhshan thus became the political, logistical and psychological backbone for both the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the United Front. Significantly, throughout this period, the Rabbani government successfully retained Afghanistan’s seat at the United Nations (see Maley 1997a:175).

In October 1997, the Taliban announced that it had changed Afghanistan’s official name from the Islamic State of Afghanistan to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (see HRW 2001:11). Their first incursion into Badakhshan occurred in November 1997. In a small Wahhabi enclave in south-eastern Badakhshan that is located on the summer trade route to the Dorah and Shah Salim Passes to Pakistan (see Map 3), Sunni Badakhshis (who had been influenced by conservative Indian reformist Islam and who had been living in exile in Pakistan where they had become members of the Taliban), returned from Chitral to Badakhshan disguised as traders. They briefly infiltrated the towns of Zardew and Zebak (see Jennings 1999), a move that was facilitated by the assistance of an extremist local commander influenced by Wahhabism. The Sunni Tajik Badakhshi Najmuddin Khan, one of the main commanders of Massoud’s shura-e nazar, immediately sent reinforcements and after a fierce but brief battle, defeated the Taliban. In August 1998, the Taliban’s offensive in north-western Afghanistan led to their occupation of the provinces of Faryab, Jawzjan and Balkh, with Takhar Province and its provincial capital Taloqan also briefly falling to Taliban control on 10/11 August (see BBC 1998;

(the first having occurred when they were driven back from Kabul in 1995). During their attempt to capture Mazar-e-Sharif, more than 3000 Taliban soldiers were killed in May 1997 under the command of Malik and at least 2000 civilians were murdered by the Taliban in August 1998, many of whom were Hazaras (see HRW 2001:21-22; Maley 1998:11-12). After several attempts between 1997 and 1998, the Taliban finally succeeded in capturing Mazar-e Sharif on 8 August 1998.

72 See Chapter Five for a detailed discussion of the Indian reformist movements.
73 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, July 1999.
74 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, April 1998. All logistical operations in Badakhshan were almost entirely under the direction of Najmuddin Khan from Warduj. Some central, as well as most southern (including the lapis lazuli mines) and north-eastern districts of Badakhshan were under his direct control. In November 1999, Najmuddin Khan was assassinated by unknown assailants (Reuters 1999b).
Davis 1998a). The nearby regions of western Badakhshan near Keshem that were largely under the control of Hezb-e Islami commanders at that time, briefly switched their allegiance to the advancing Taliban until Massoud sent reinforcements. From then onwards, the people of Badakhshan anticipated an imminent assault by the Taliban.

With the Taliban’s entry into Kabul in September 1996 and the northern retreat of the coalition members of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, the Jamiat-e Islami became increasingly factionalised, with members positioning themselves in accordance with leadership and locality: Massoud-Panjshir versus Rabbani-Faizabad (see also Saikal 1998b:36-37). Likewise, during my field research, Badakhshan was periodically beset by frictions within the Jamiat-e Islami, the Rabbani government as well as within the United Front. The province was roughly divided into two spheres of political influence. The first was led by President Rabbani who controlled most of western Badakhshan and some districts north of Faizabad; the second belonged to Massoud who exerted his influence in most areas south of Faizabad as well as in the northeastern regions, including the border regions with Tajikistan, Pakistan and China. Yet while Rabbani directly controlled the capital Faizabad through an alliance of local commanders, a number of whom were his relatives, his political hold was contingent upon his accommodation of conservative and extremist allies. The western parts of Faizabad, for example, were controlled by the Sunni Uzbek Basir Khalid and his brothers who represented a traditional and conservative faction of the Jamiat-e Islami, but who were also close to the ulema and to some commanders aligned with Hekmatyar’s party (see Dorronsoro 1992:7; Rubin 1995:219, 285). The areas west and north of Faizabad (Argu and Shahr-e Bozurg) were entirely under the control of powerful Hezb-e Islami commanders, some of whom, such as Mawlawi

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76 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, 1998.
77 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, 1998.
78 In order to satisfy some Hezb-e Islami commanders who were nominally loyal to the United Front, it seems that Rabbani installed the Sunni Uzbek Kheyradmand from Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami as the Governor of Badakhshan in early January 1999. Kheyradmand was an old foe of Massoud’s shura-e nazar and was assassinated in suspicious circumstances only three months after taking up his position (see AFP 1999). His death led to an armed struggle in April 1999 in which reportedly two hundred of his supporters briefly held strategic buildings including the airport in Faizabad and during which soldiers of Massoud’s shura-e nazar were killed (Reuters 1999a).
79 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, August 1999.
Kheyradmand from Argu, were known for their Wahhabi-influenced puritan interpretations of Islam. Long-standing tensions continued to resurface between the Jamiat-e Islami and Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami in Badakhshan not only as a consequence of ideological differences, but due to their respective ethnic and kinship alliances. In addition to this tenuous alliance, small pockets of Wahhabi commanders who were located in central and south-eastern Badakhshan, intermittently switched their allegiance between Hezb-e Islami and Sayyaf’s Ittehad-e Islami, generally in accordance with the degree of financial inducement on offer (see also Dorronsoro 1992:8).

Communities in many areas of Badakhshan that were controlled by the United Front were required to pay taxes to commanders who then relayed this income to the military structure of either Rabbani’s Faizabad shura or Massoud’s shura-e nazar. Rabbani’s relatively weak and ineffective administration, however, meant that the qanun-e kalashnikov prevailed in much of the province (see also Goodhand 2000:272). Moreover, the province was partly reliant upon a “quasi-feudal” system of opium economy (Goodhand 2000:270). As Shahrani (1998) notes, in addition to the titular national administration, “community-based parallel power structures” based on “Sharia-governed civil society” were under the control of local commanders who were at times only nominally aligned with Massoud, Rabbani, Hekmatyar, or Sayyaf. Any substantial monetary incentive could easily facilitate a switch in political allegiance (Shahrani 1998:230).

Following the jihad against the Soviet-backed government, a Wahhabi emirate was established in Argu by an aлим who had been linked to the ultra-conservative Wahhabi-influenced Panjpir madrassa, a private religious institution in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province that was related to the Indian Deoband madrassa (see Chapter Five for a discussion on religious institutions in Afghanistan as well as Wahhabism and Deobandism). This Badakhshi ‘emirate’ spanned a territory that covered the regions of Jurm and Shahr-e Bozurg. Its extremist and anti-Shiite members were Sunni Tajiks and Uzbeks who were mostly aligned with Hezb-e Islami. Mawlawi Kheyradmand was associated with this group (see Roy 1995:82-83). Ideologically, this group was close to the Taliban, but, perhaps paradoxically, it was at times aligned with the United Front, albeit tenuously.

Dorronsoro argues that the influence of the Hezb-e Islami in the Keshem region may date back to Mohammad Omar in the 1970s (see 1992:7). More recent tensions relate to the times when the local Jamiat-e Islami representative of Argu, Jamaluddin, a graduate from the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University, was replaced by the Uzbek and Hezb-e Islami commander, Mawlawi Kheyradmand (see 1992:8; Dorronsoro 2000:165).

Personal communication with member of local elite, Badakhshan, August 1999.

Personal communication, members of local elite, Faizabad, 1998, 1999.
Prior to the emergence of the Taliban, Rabbani’s government was unmistakably conservative, partly in reaction to the liberal and purportedly un-Islamic cultural expression that had been permitted during the Communist period. However, several factors led to the integration of ultra-conservative Islamic edicts into the framework of the titular national government. These included the lack of any effective support from moderate Pushtuns in Rabbani’s government, the assumption of Hekmatyar’s position as Prime Minister in Kabul from late June until September 1996, and Rabbani’s continued reliance upon the allegiance of extremist leaders and their followers such as Sayyaf’s Ittehad-e Islami as well as Hezb-e Islami commanders who were committed to the United Front. In addition to the intra-party disputes of the Jamiat-e Islami, the meddling of outside actors such as Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, and the presence of foreign fighters including Arabs, Chechens and Pakistanis, accentuated the introduction of non-Afghan, Arabian Islamic cultural norms.

Once the Taliban took control of Kabul and the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden officially assumed residence in southern Afghanistan as their guest, other Arabs filtered into the country. Significantly, bin Laden not only financially supported the Taliban, but acted as a form of ‘religious mentor’ to the militia. In fact, this alliance proved to be the final determining factor that prevented Rabbani from governing successfully (see Saikal 1998b). By 2001, the Taliban seemed to have become completely subservient to the political control of bin Laden and his mostly Arab extremist militant associates, as evinced by their destruction of the Buddha statues in Bamiyan and their arrest and incarceration of Western and Afghan humanitarian workers from the German NGO Shelter Now, whom they accused of Christian proselytisation. On 9 September, 2001, Ahmad Shah Massoud, the charismatic Islamic resistance leader and military strategist of the shura-e nazar for both the United Front and the Islamic State of Afghanistan, was assassinated by Arab suicide bombers in Takhar Province near the border of Badakhshan.\footnote{The Arab journalists were carrying Belgian passports and posed as journalists. A bomb that had been concealed in one of their cameras killed the assassin as well as Massoud.} This seemed to be not only a sign that the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies were destined to govern the entire country, but that they also had a much broader intention. The atrocities committed two days later in New York and Washington on September 11, horrifically testified to their agenda of global terrorism.
Due to the prevalence of extremist Islamic values within the larger context of Afghanistan, particularly in the light of the Taliban's espousal of 'pure Islam', a degree of cultural confusion arose as to what Afghan cultural practices were and were not permissible 'Islamic' conduct. This upsurge of conservatism challenged the legitimacy of moderate Hanafi Islam as formally espoused by the ruling Islamic State of Afghanistan and as a consequence, the Rabbani government had to ensure that they were not perceived to be tolerant of 'unlawful' practices. Indeed, Rabbani's 'rapprochement' with Hekmatyar in 1996 (see Maley 2002:215-216), combined with the orthodox attitudes of extremist Muslims who had been influenced by ultra-conservative Indian or Arabian reformist ideologies, meant that the code of conduct for cultural expression propounded by the Rabbani government, and thereby also by Badakhshan's provincial government, was not dissimilar from the policies that the Taliban were soon to impose. Significantly, Hekmatyar had often asserted that members of the Jamiat-e Islami were not Islamic (Olesen 1995:294) and when serving briefly as Prime Minister in Kabul in 1996, he had been quick to implement strict bans on aesthetic performances such as music and dance and to make the burqa compulsory. As later chapters will elucidate, Sunni Islamic practices were never in dispute, but were at all times endorsed by all religio-political leaders.

The result within the province of Badakhshan was that non-religious practices, which prior to 1992 had been tolerated under Hanafi Islamic jurisprudence, were no longer patronised in the province. Yet at the same time, they were generally not explicitly forbidden. However, an intensification of restrictions on non-religious cultural practices was noticeable when I returned to Badakhshan in 1999 after an absence of twelve months. This was particularly true in regions that were contested by various opposing factions, such as in Faizabad where many mujahideen parties and independent commanders kept offices. A slow, yet gradual 'Talibanisation' was thus emerging in Badakhshan among the local population and commanders alike. It seemed that the diversity of armed groups in Badakhshan either positioned themselves clearly with the United Front forces, or they became more conservative with respect to their ideas of Islamic conduct. In a number of cases, particularly

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85 See Chapter Five for an excerpt of an (undated) manifesto that Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami released prior to Hekmatyar resuming the position of Prime Ministership, and which states his extremist and radical views with respect to the censorship of non-Sunni religious practices.
86 For example, Hezb-e Islami, Jamiat-e Islami and Ittehad-e Islami kept offices in Faizabad.
87 Personal observation and communication with locals in Faizabad, 1998 and 1999.
among some Sunni Uzbek or Pushtun Badakhshis who were followers of Wahhabism, Islamic views were more extreme than those of the Taliban. This extremism, however, was largely the result of ethnic tensions, whereby a non-Tajik ethnic group may have sought to differentiate and distance themselves from the ideologies of the ruling Jamiat-e Islami in Badakhshan who were predominantly Tajik. It is also possible that members of such extremist groups may even have been preparing for their future role as allies of the Taliban, given that it seemed almost inevitable that the militia would ultimately take control of Badakhshan.

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The historical and political overview provided in this chapter has explicated the multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian nature of Badakhshan and highlighted its struggle to remain an independent unit within the larger context of Central Asia. Functioning largely as a quasi-feudal society, the territory of Badakhshan was initially controlled by local rulers through a traditional patron-client system of loyalties, with regular feuds occurring among major stakeholders. 88 With the emergence of the Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman, Badakhshan was subsumed into the nation of Afghanistan whilst serving as a strategic buffer zone during the Great Game between Tsarist Russia and British India. The various accounts of the removal of the Prophet’s cloak from Faizabad attest to the centrality of Islam in the region; the cloak not only provided the modern name for the Badakhshi capital, but the oral history of the khirqa represents an important form of intangible heritage for the inhabitants of Badakhshan. Relatedly, two specific types of Islam have historically served as important cultural markers for the people of Badakhshan: Seventeen Shiite Ismaili Islam that was introduced in the eleventh century through Nasir Khusraw, and Naqshbandi Sufism with which not only the Yarid rulers were associated but also, more recently, the former President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The rule of King Zahir Shah from the 1950s to the late 1970s led to the establishment of institutions of modern education from which a number of members of the Badakhshi elite benefited. Yet during the latter period of his

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88 I refrain from using the term ‘feudal’ since the peasants and labourers did to a degree also benefit from their patrons, or landlords, through a system of reciprocity. For example, a land owner may assist financially in times of hardship, or may improve the structure of a road which would then benefit the entire community.
rule, through the ensuing Presidency of Mohammad Daoud, and particularly with the rise of the mujahideen during the jihad against the Communist governments, ethnic, sectarian and regional tensions became manifest in the political arena. These divisions are exemplified by the political figures of Nur Mohammad Taraki and Tahir Badakhshi, both of whom were secularly-educated Sunni Tajiks and who initially held very similar political views, but whose ethnic differences made their Communist aspirations irreconcilable (see Anwar 1989:126). Likewise, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani were educated in government madrassas and became conservative Sunni Islamists, both having belonged to the Muslim Brothers. However, their political organisations (Jamiat-e Islami and Hezb-e Islami) – while initially similar – were marked by ethnic differences that inhibited their united approach to nation formation. These ethnic tensions initially arose in the context of continued domination by the Durrani Pushtuns (1747 to 1978) and were the catalyst for the politicisation of ethnic or sectarian groups such as the Hazaras and the Ismailis that were historically marginalised in Afghan society.

Both the inauguration of Afghanistan’s interim administration on 22 December 2001 and the establishment of the Transitional Authority on 19 June 2002 were marked by an attempt to include all ethnic and sectarian factions. The appointment of Hamid Karzai initially as Chairman and later as President has meant that a moderate Pushtun, as well as a member of the Durrani confederation, has returned to govern Afghanistan. Not surprisingly, the three most senior portfolios in the interim administration were awarded to Panjshiri Sunni Tajiks from the inner circle of Ahmad Shah Massoud. In contrast, former President Burhanuddin Rabbani was not assigned a ministerial post, although three members of his Faizabad shura in Badakhshan received minor portfolios in the interim administration. The dominance of Panjshiri members and the marginalisation of Rabbani’s Faizabad shura in the Transitional Authority, in this case reflect regional rather than ethnic differences. However, in order to ensure a harmonious ethnic representation in the new cabinet of the Transitional Authority under the Presidency of Hamid Karzai, which was determined during the Emergency Loya Jirga from 11-19 June 2002, the Panjshiri faction had to rescind the important post of interior minister to the Sunni Pushtun Taj Mohammad Wardak. In 2002, Klimburg’s observations about the crises and tensions that would inevitably accompany Afghanistan’s path into modernity seem again to be rather appropriate.

89 The Ministry of Defence went to Mohammad Qassem Fahim, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Dr Abdullah and the Ministry of the Interior to Mohammad Younus Qanooni.
It is perhaps paradoxical that both Marxist/Leninist and Islamist ideologies – albeit in very differing ways – were to have such serious consequences for cultural performances in Afghanistan during the Rabbani Presidency and the Taliban period. The Communist governments’ radical modernisation of cultural practices was the catalyst for an intensification of traditional and mostly orthodox Islamic cultural values and a general backlash against all non-religious heritage. Yet intra-Islamist and ethnic rivalries continued to plague the Rabbani regime and its control over the failing Afghan state. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, the emergence of political Islam from the 1950s onwards effected a gradual shift from more moderate to more conservative interpretations of Hanafi Sunni Islam. In turn, this trend contributed to the pervasive yet mostly tacit condemnation of non-religious cultural heritage and subsequent restrictions of aesthetic cultural performances in Badakhshan. Yet conversely, since Badakhshan remained the only province beyond the Taliban’s control and was instrumental in the defeat of the militia in November 2001, the Rabbani period may be understood to have played a significant role in the safeguarding of some of Afghanistan’s non-Islamic cultural traditions, primarily the practices of sport that were clearly acceptable under Hanafi Islamic jurisprudence.
Islam and Performance

Dance where you can break your own self and
pluck out the cotton from the wound of sensuality!

People dance and frolic in the square –
men dance in their own blood.

When they have been delivered from their own hands, they clap their hands;
when they have jumped outside of their imperfection, they dance.

Within themselves their minstrels play the tambourine;
their uproar makes the oceans clap their waves

You do not see,
but they can hear the leaves on the trees also clapping.

You cannot perceive the clapping of the leaves –
you need the ear of the heart, not the body’s ear.

(Rumi translated by and cited in Chittick 1983:327-328).

Since the formation of Afghanistan as an identifiable political unit in 1747, all
facets of its society have been deeply embedded in Islam. In view of the fact
that Islam has consistently pervaded national as well as “parochial identities of
tribe, ethnic group and local community” (Olesen 1995:298), it has thus been
of primary influence in shaping Afghanistan’s cultural heritage. Even so, since
the 1970s, the radical shifts in political systems, from monarchy to republic
(1973-1978), communist (1978-1992), and finally to moderate and extremist
Islamist (1992-2001), have been accompanied by rather divergent views of
society, tradition and culture. During Afghanistan’s modern period, for
example, that is, the latter period of the reign of King Zahir Shah and subsequently during the Presidency of Daoud, attempts were made to foster a national cultural identity by appropriating cultural practices, including aesthetic performances such as the atan-e meli (national dance), as a means of uniting the interests and identities of the diverse peoples who inhabit the territory of Afghanistan. However, even by the mid-1970s under Daoud, it was apparent that rural and tribal identities as well as religious affiliations were clearly being neglected, if not suppressed. This state of affairs set the foundation for a conservative, Islamic backlash which intensified following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, resulting in the proclamation of a jihad against the Communist regime. By 1992, the parties comprising the mujahideen had succeeded in establishing an Islamist government under President Rabbani, and Islam was reaffirmed as the principal regulator of Afghan cultural practices.

Yet, with the exception of a six month period of relative calm from March-October 1995 (Maley 2002:206), the realisation of Islamist ideals in the inauguration of the Islamic State of Afghanistan did not represent an enduring peaceful resolution of the competing interests of the diverse Islamist and Islamic groups comprising the mujahideen. Instead, a rise of ultra-conservatism led to the unforeseeable emergence of internecine war and with Hekmatyar’s forces frequently and destructively rocketing Kabul and renegade troops of Jamiat-e Islami, Ittehad-e Islami or Hezb-e Wahdat, at times involved in civilian atrocities (Maley 2002:203-206), the Presidency of Rabbani was seriously destabilised and ultimately undermined. As discussed in Chapter Four, these rivalries were to a large degree orchestrated from abroad with the financial and military support particularly of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran.

In turn, this had led to a general escalation in Islamic orthodoxy throughout Afghanistan, and climaxed in the emergence of the Taliban who took control of Kabul in 1996. Once in charge of the capital, they had quickly instituted their puritanical version of Islam as exemplified by their strict censorship of many non-Islamic cultural practices, from recreational activities such as gudi paran jangi (kite-flying), the equestrian sport of buzkashi, to aesthetic entertainment like music and dance.¹ Nevertheless, while the Taliban’s orthodox interpretation of non-religious performances captured the world’s attention, it was not entirely a new development as debates about the legality of such

¹ This Central Asian equestrian game will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. Kite-flying literally translates as ‘fighting flying puppets’ (see Dupree 1973:212).
practices have been a recurring theme not only in Afghanistan, but throughout the history of Islam.

This chapter will begin with a close examination of the main schisms in Islam, since the social actors of this study, the majority Sunnis and the minority Ismailis in Badakhshan, are followers of sectarian groups which have long-standing conflicting attitudes towards aesthetic performances. Many of the performances observed during my fieldwork occurred among the Ismailis, so a brief description of their history is necessary to facilitate an understanding of their social environment and their political and religious marginalisation. Key Islamic concepts and movements that shaped prevailing understandings of cultural performances in Badakhshan’s conservative society in 1998 and 1999, will also be discussed. This will necessarily include a summary of normative Islamic sources, as well as interpretations and comments on these sources from theological, legal and philosophical perspectives. Finally, I will provide an overview of the shifts in the performance of non-religious practices in Afghanistan and Badakhshan that arose during the mujahideen period, Rabbani Presidency and Taliban era until the time of my fieldwork.

**Normative Islam**

Since the death of the Prophet Mohammad in 632, Muslims have lived in far-reaching territories as diverse sectarian groups, each drawing on the undisputed authority of Islam’s normative texts. In order to acknowledge the numerous and diverse influences of such factors as geography, language and ethnicity on Islam, a debate currently exists about whether Islam should be referred to as singular or plural. The Egyptian anthropologist Abdul Hamid M. el-Zein argues that the use of the term “islams” instead of the singular “Islam” allows

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2 The term normative is used here to describe Islam as a religion that is based on authoritative texts, for example early scriptural sources such as the Quran and hadith (the Prophet’s words and deeds). Building on Max Weber’s theories, Shiloah (1995:34) identifies Islam’s normative texts as a “sacred written tradition”, which as a result of “continual editing and complex processes of interpretation...tend to become the focus of specialized intellectual competence and prestige in the religious field and...rationalized systems of religious doctrine.” Debates on performance and Islam have been primarily conducted in the language of Persian and Arabic. Hence, the literature reviewed in this chapter is derived from secondary sources as well as from translations of source materials.

3 Normative Islam stands in opposition to mystical Islam, which is not necessarily textually based but emphasises an inward union with God, often through the performance of aesthetic practices.
for a deeper understanding of the "multiplicity of cultural meanings" in which Islam is practised globally (1977:254). Hence, although I will refer to Islam in the singular, the reader should bear in mind that the nature of Islam is multifaceted and dynamic and is subject to the influence of its context. While all Muslims concord with the authoritative knowledge arising from Islam's normative texts, that is, the sacred text of the Quran, together with the hadith, the Prophet's words and doctrines, and the sunna, a practical model that includes the practices, customs, deeds and utterances of the Prophet Mohammad (see Bouhdiba 1985:2; Wensinck 1987:555), issues concerning the nature of 'authentic' Islam have arisen, primarily as a consequence of ambiguities of interpretation (see Eickelman 1998:251). Such concerns have become particularly manifest in the field of performance, with both religious and non-religious cultural performances having repeatedly been the objects of dispute in a variety of times and places. Discussion of the relationship between performance and Islam thus needs to be grounded in Sharia jurisprudence and the normative sources of Islam.

As in most Sunni-dominated societies, the Hanafi school of jurisprudence has always been the major form of Islamic law in Afghanistan, and was recognised as the state religion during the first three constitutions (1923, 1931 and 1964). While the Communist regime (1978-1992) claimed to be tolerant towards Islamic principles and to fully respect Sharia (see Kamali 1985:32), in reality this represented little more than lip service. Unlike the previous constitutions, however, the provisional constitution under the Presidency of Babrak Karmal in 1980 legitimised "the practice of Islam for the Muslims of Afghanistan" (Kamali 1985:34). Moreover, it made no change to the application of Sharia law, with the result that in cases of legal ambiguity, preference was still given to Sharia (see Kamali 1985:34). Nevertheless, most references to Islam that appeared in The Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, 1980, were generally "non-committal, oblique and shrouded within texts covering various other topics, thereby diluting the reference to

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4 The Quran is the unquestioned sacred text and authority containing the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Mohammad. Covering most aspects of social and cultural life, it provides a conceptual framework for all Muslims (see Davies 1988:105). Many hadith contain explicit sayings of the Prophet which were collected by people close to Mohammad (see Akhtar 1990:222-223n2; Fischer and Abedi 1990:123).

5 Four main schools of law came to predominate in Sunni: the Hanbali, Shafiite, Maliki, and Hanafi, each school taking its name from its founder. The main differences between them lie in the principles of legal reasoning, especially with reference to the hadith and the legitimacy, limits and methods of ijtihad (see Hourani 1991:69).
Islam (Kamali 1985:33-34). Nevertheless, by 1987, Islam was reinstated as the state religion (Giustozzi 2000:58). Further, while neither the Islamic State of Afghanistan (1992-2001) under the presidency of Rabbani nor the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996-2001) under Mullah Omar formalised constitutions, since no secular law existed at that time, Hanafi-based Sharia effectively became the only form of jurisprudence.

Hanafi jurisprudence recognises four sources of law: the Quran and the sunna, together with the application of qiyas (reasoning by analogy) and ijma (consensus). The ulema (Doctors of the Law), however, have exclusive privilege in the interpretation of legal matters arising out of qiyas and are mostly also the interpreters of ijma (see Olesen 1995:59n20; Roy 1986:80). Sharia is based on Islam’s normative texts which were “developed largely by means of interpretive elaborations” (Messick 1993:30) and are regarded by most Muslims as reflecting “divinely ordained norms and ideals of just conduct” (Eickelman 1998:258). Indeed, Islamic law regulates all public and private behaviour, providing specific guidelines for personal hygiene, diet and sexual conduct, in addition to specific rules for religious matters such as prayers, fasting and alms-giving. Hence, Sharia encompasses much more than the equivalent concept of law in the English language and in Western societies (see Eickelman 1998:257). In many Muslim countries, including Afghanistan, however, Islamic law may actually be understood as the product of the interplay between local law and Sharia through the discipline of fiqh (jurisprudence), that is the “critical use of the sunna, hadith and Qur’an” (Fischer and Abedi 1990:125). This chapter will primarily concentrate on aspects of the Quran and hadith that are relevant to an exploration of the legality of cultural performances, and especially aesthetic practices, in an Islamic society.

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6 In cases not encompassed by Islamic jurisprudence, qiyas is used to make a judgement through ijtihad (personal interpretation). The ulema are religious leaders who have usually successfully completed a higher degree in a madrassa (see Roy 1986:80). In the early Islamic period, they were “the main agents in the interpretation of God’s will and thus developed legal rules” (Buskens 2000:8).

7 Pushtunwali (the tribal code of behaviour for Pushtun communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan) is an example in which local law is deeply embedded in Sharia law.
Sectarian Islam in Badakhshan

Afghanistan’s population is comprised of approximately eighty percent Sunni Muslims, nineteen percent Twelver Shiite Muslims, and about one percent Sevenener Shiite Ismaili Muslims (see Mostyn and Hourani 1988:293). Two Islamic sects are prevalent in Badakhshan: the predominant Hanafi Sunni Muslims and the minority Sevenener Shiite Ismaili Muslims of the Nizari branch. The Sunnis are named after the early Muslims who identified with the dogma and practice of the sunna. In contrast with the other major Islamic sects that have arisen under the umbrella of Shiism, Sunnis follow the orthodox or Medina school of leadership succession (see Wensinck 1987:555-556) and constitute about ninety percent of the world’s Muslim population. The historical rift between Sunnis and Shiites is well documented and the history of events will not be addressed here in detail. In fact, as emphasised by the historian Farhad Daftary, it is perhaps more important to recognise that both the Sunni and Shiite Islamic factions are “integral part[s] of Islam” and should be viewed “as different interpretations of the same Islamic message” (1990:36).

The Shiites, literally meaning ‘partisans’, are members of the largest non-orthodox Muslim sect and are also known as Twelver Shiites or Ithna Ashariyya, which refers to the number of accepted imams in their lineage. The main Twelver Shiite population in Afghanistan, locally called Dovazdah (Twelver) Imami Shiites, is centred around the Hazarajat in central Afghanistan, predominantly in Bamiyan Province and surrounding districts, but communities are also located in Herat and Kabul (see Map 2). Although sharing many common traditions with the Sunnis and adhering to almost identical practices, the Shiite doctrine is based on the spiritual pre-eminence of Ali and has its own legal school and body of hadith (see Davies 1988:63; Strothmann 1987:350). The practice of taqqiya (concealment) is also an

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8 Shiism evolved as a political movement in seventh century Arabia. Originally, this group was made up of some friends and supporters of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad. Ali was the fourth Caliph from 656-661 and eventually his group of supporters became known as the party of Ali who view the only legitimate successors to Mohammad as the descendants of his son-in-law Ali and his daughter Fatima (Daftary 1990:35).

9 The Sunni count the first four caliphs, the friends of the Prophet, as legitimate successors, whereas Shiites acknowledge only Ali as the first successor. The Shiites refer to the Prophet’s successors as ‘Imams’ in contrast to the Sunni’s term, ‘Caliph’. For a further discussion see Brill (1987), van Donzel (1994), Daftary (1990), and Hourani (1991).

10 Similar practices include “the recitation of the faith, prayer, fasting, alms, and pilgrimage” (see Lindholm 1996:167), and the application of a body of traditions which is used in
important aspect of Shiism, allowing followers in times of persecution, “to dissimulate their real beliefs if their expression would result in grave physical danger or a threat to their community” (Ahmad 1969:17; Eickelman 1998:265). 11 Like their Sunni co-religionists, the Shiites have also had to deal with internal factionalisation. Following the death of the Shiite’s sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq in 765 (see Lindholm 1996:174), disputes over succession led to splits within the erstwhile homogeneous sect, and an active struggle among the various factions to determine the post of Imam. 12 One of the larger claimants, the Ismailis, recognised Ismail as Imam, and he became the eponymous figure from whom the sect derives its name. 13

The early formative period of the Ismaili belief system is thought to have been from the mid-eighth century to the beginning of the Fatimid period in the early tenth century (Daftary 1990:91), when the Ismaili Imams ruled over a large territory and were respected for their “highly and well-organised administration” (Aavani 1977:2). 14 In contrast to the formal and definitive approach of normative Sunnism, Ismaili dogma incorporated Neoplatonic ideas, as well as “Christian and Zoroastrian messianism...to provide a complete framework of belief which was a powerful intellectual alternative to Sunnism” (Turner 1974:87-88). Moreover, the Quran was seen to hold both authoritative and mystical meaning. This esoteric approach later developed into a widespread practice of mystical Islam, when mysticism was introduced into more orthodox forms of Islam, primarily Sunnism. 15 The pervasive spread of conjunction with the Quran. The major differences between the two Muslim groups lie in the inheritance laws and specific ritual observances.

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11 As a result of discrimination against Shiites by previous regimes and especially by the Taliban militia, it is possible that many may have chosen to conceal their faith. The exact number of Shiites in urban areas therefore remains unclear. To a lesser degree, taqqiya is occasionally also practised by Sunnis.

12 Some Shiites believed that Jafar al-Sadiq had designated his eldest son Ismail as his succeeding Imam. Since Ismail died before his father, however, the majority of Shiites concluded that Jafar al-Sadiq (died 765) had appointed yet another son, Ismail’s younger half-brother, Musa al-Kazim, as his successor as seventh Imam (see Daftary 1990:94).

13 To date, the doctrine of the imamate has retained a central position in the teachings of the Ismailis (Daftary 1998:1; Madelung 1987).

14 The Fatimid imamate was established in 909 and lasted until the reign of the eighth Fatimid Caliph and Imam al-Mustansir in 1094, when the major Ismaili division occurred (Daftary 1990:144). This period is usually regarded as the ‘golden age’ of Ismailism and the summit of Ismaili thought and literature (Daftary 1998:2).

15 Parallels between Ismailism and Sufism may be seen to exist in that as a religious guide, the imam, in a manner not unlike the Sufi leader, “led to the divine hidden within him...[b]ut in contrast to the varied personal devotion of the Sufis, this Shi’ite devotion of the Nizari [Ismaili]...is centred upon a single cosmic individual” (Hodgson 1955:165).
mystical Islam will be discussed later with respect to its influence on the traditions of aesthetic performance. Moreover, the Ismaili doctrines of spiritual enlightenment and "the companionship of the imams" not only offered an alternative to Sunni praxis, but fostered a desire to "overthrow the established order and to inaugurate a new society based on justice" (Turner 1974:88). Hence, a diversity of social groups, including disillusioned intellectuals, as well as the dispossessed and illiterate were attracted to its teachings.

The Ismailis were also well-known for their missionary work to remote and peripheral regions of the Islamic world. At its peak, their Fatimid dynasty (909-1171) ruled as far eastward as the trans-Amu Darya region in Central Asia and India (see Daftary 1990:144). But eventually, the dynasty began to falter and when problems of succession arose, it split into several groups. Following the death of the eighth Fatimid Caliph (and Imam), al-Mustansir (1036-1094), at the end of the eleventh century, the Fatimid Ismailis divided into the Nizari and the Mustali Ismaili sects (see Daftary 1998:3; Holzwarth 1994:12). In contrast to the Mustali Ismailis, the Nizari Ismailis acquired political prominence within the territories controlled by the hostile Sunni Saljuqs, and established an independent state of their own based at the mountain fortress of Alamut in northern Persia. This state persisted for almost 166 years and its communities were scattered across vast territories, from

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16 The centre of the Ismailis was initially in Ifriqiya, in contemporary Tunisia, and from there they expanded their territory after the conquest of Egypt (see Daftary 1990:144).
17 For a short period, the Ismailis ruled over "North Africa, Sicily, Egypt, the Red Sea coast of Africa, Yaman and the Hijaz with the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Syria, and Palestine" (Daftary 1990:144). Later, from 973, they ruled in Egypt and made Cairo their capital.
18 One imam, for example, denied his own divinity and a later imam was without sons (see Lindholm 1996:174).
19 Al-Mustansir ruled as the eighth Fatimid Caliph. A Caliph, literally "deputy of God", is a title that was given to the ruler in Muslim countries who, as the successor of Mohammad, guided the Muslim community in civil and religious affairs. The dispute about succession al-Mustansir arose from a challenge between the designated successor, al-Mustansir's eldest son Nizar, and his youngest son Ahmad. Nizar was unsuccessful in his bid as heir and was eventually executed in 1095 (Daftary 1998:2).
20 The Saljuqs (approximately 1038-1194) were a major Muslim dynasty of Turkic origin that ruled vast regions such as Persia, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine (see Dupree 1973:315; Gregorian 1969:15; Lindholm 1996:277). The Mustaliya sect later divided again into the Hafizi and Tayyibi factions. The Tayyibiya recognised al-Tayyib, the infant son of al-Amir, as their new Imam. Al-Amir was al-Mustansir's grandson (see Daftary 1990:256). This Ismaili sect went through varying periods of concealment and manifestation, wherein their respective imams were either hidden from or visible to the public (Daftary 1990:257). Their doctrines remained close to that of the Fatimid Ismailis.
eastern Persia to Syria (see Daftary 1990:324). In the mid-thirteenth century, following their defeat by the Mongols, the Nizari state disintegrated and little information exists as to their subsequent fate. What is clear, however, is the serious religious persecution that the Ismailis suffered during this post-Alamut period (Holzwarth 1994:13). Indeed, it seems most likely that from the fifteenth century onwards, through their practice of *taqqiya*, many Nizari Ismailis including the imams of the post-Alamut period, evaded hostile Sunni authorities by disguising themselves as Sufis (see Daftary 1998:4; Madelung 1987:205). This argument seems quite feasible given that mystical Islam was gaining widespread influence at that time. Moreover, an Ismaili-Sufi connection is also noticeable in literature of this period (see Daftary 1998:166).

Daftary (1998:3-4) suggests that many of the Alamut Ismailis may have gone into exile and established new existences as fragmented agriculturalist communities in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India. Even with the loss of their home state, and their subsequent suppression and marginalisation on the fringes of other societies, the Nizari Ismailis successfully managed to maintain their lineage of *Hazir* (Living) Imams. This was facilitated by the fact that

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21 The fortress of Alamut is located in contemporary northern Iran. The Nizari Alamut state, with its centre in Daylaman in eastern Persia, was defeated by the Mongols in 1256 (see 1990:324; Daftary 1998:3). The Islamicist Wilferd Madelung (1987:202) believes that these independent Nizari communities possibly developed independently of the Alamut centre under the leadership of local “pirs or shaykhs” (spiritual guides).

22 Daftary mentions that following the loss of their capital in Alamut, “the Nizari imams went into hiding, losing direct contacts with their followers” (1998:4).

23 Sufis are the followers of mystical Islam. The Arabic equivalent of mysticism in Islam is *tasawwuf*, a concept that can be traced “as an organized movement” to the mid-eighth century (see Shiloah 1995:40). *Tasawwuf* is possibly a reference to the woollen robes worn by ascetics “as a sign of penitence and worldly renunciation” (Crapanzano 1973:15; Hourani 1991:72).

24 These agricultural communities in Afghan Badakhshan would have been largely self-sufficient as they still are today. In the urban areas of Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan, however, as a result of Soviet policies, traditional agricultural practices were abandoned and urban communities (e.g., the provincial capital Khorog) became dependent on Soviet food subsidies, since their agricultural land was used for urban expansion.

25 Those Shiite sectarian groups, including the Nizaris, which regard Ismail as the true successor of Jafar al-Sadiq, believe that a living imam always has to be present as the legitimate descendent of the Prophet and successor of Ali (see Holzwarth 1994:6). A number of sectarian Ismaili groups, however, selected their own candidate for the position of *Hazir* Imam (see Lindholm 1996:174). Other Shiite sects consider the seventh Imam to be the last and hidden Imam. From the mid-nineteenth century, during the modern period of the Nizari Ismailis, the Nizari Imami became “known to the outside world as the Āghā Khān” (Daftary 1990:437). Prince Karim Aga Khan IV is the 49th *Hazir* Imam and is the current spiritual head of the Nizari Ismaili community.
during the Alamut period (1090-1256), dais (Ismaili missionaries) had already established local “dynasties of pīrs and mīrs” (spiritual guides) in more remote areas such as the Pamir and upper Oxus regions of Badakhshan (Daftary 1998:165). These Ismaili communities of north-eastern Badakhshan had accepted the Nizari imamate (see Madelung 1987:202). Prior to this advent of Alamut-influenced Nizari Ismaili Islam into Central Asia, it seems that many such communities in this region would have practised ancient Iranian religions (Daftary 1998:165). However, during the period from the fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, the Ismailis living in the Pamirs of contemporary Afghan Badakhshan and Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan represented the largest Ismaili community in the world (see Holzwarth 1990:14-15).

The Persian-speaking Nizari Ismaili communities of contemporary Afghanistan are now mainly concentrated in the Pamir and Upper Amu Darya region of north-eastern Badakhshan, in south-eastern Badakhshan, in areas of the Hazarajat, in Baghlan and Kunduz provinces, as well in the capital Kabul (see Map 2).26 Local practices in Badakhshan were strongly influenced by the eleventh century poet, philosopher and missionary Nasir Khusraw (1004 to approximately 1077) (see Holzwarth 1994:12, 113n3; Hunsberger 2000:xxi).27 While selected works by other classical Persian poets and in particular Sufi poets such as Sanai, Farid al-Din Attar and Jalal al-Din Rumi, have been revered by the Nizari Ismailis and have influenced their doctrines (see Daftary 1998:166-167), Nasir Khusraw remains the single most important influence on all Ismailis in Badakhshan. During my field research, every Ismaili I interviewed affirmed the centrality of Nasir Khusraw to their local culture.28 His popularity in the Weltanschauung of the Badakhshi Ismailis is also reflected in the existence of many images of the poet in the form of paintings

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26 In light of the discrimination suffered under the Taliban, as also experienced by Twelver Shiite communities, it is impossible to judge the exact percentage of Ismailis that resided in Kabul. Many Ismailis may have chosen to practice taqqiya during that period. It is quite possible therefore that since the defeat of the Taliban, their numbers may have increased.

27 Nasir Khusraw was born in 1004 in the village of Qubadiyan, near Marv which used to be part of Khurasan (contemporary Balkh Province, Afghanistan). He died between 1072 and 1078 (see Aavani 1977:1, 11; Hunsberger 2000:4, 261n11). According to the historian Alice Hunsberger, Nasir Khusraw worked up to approximately 1044 as a financial administrator for the local courts in Balkh, Khurasan (initially for the Ghaznavid sultans and later for their successors, the Saljuqs).

28 His continued popularity even extends outside of the wider Badakhshan region to West and South Asia. Both Boldirev's Russian translation of Mullah Sang Mohammad's Tarikh-e Badakhshan (1959) and K. Mohammad-Zadeh and M. Shah-Zadeh's Tarikh-e Badakhshan (1973) comment on Khusraw's influence in Badakhshan.
and posters in jamaat khanas (Ismaili religious community houses), especially those of the Nizari Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan (see also Holzwarth 1994:134).

Attracted by the fame of Fatimid Caliph (and Imam) al-Mustansir, Nasir Khusraw, then an orthodox Sunni Muslim, travelled from Khurasan to Egypt where he converted to Ismailism (Hunsberger 2000:4-5). After a six year residence in Cairo, the capital of the Fatimids, Nasir Khusraw was appointed hujja (Proof) of Khurasan by al-Mustansir (see Aavani 1977:10). As the head of an Ismaili dawa (Ismaili religious organisation), he started his missionary activity in Balkh, but due to assassination attempts by Sunni opponents, was forced to flee the region. Around 1061 (Daftary 1998:103), he escaped eastwards to Yumgan in central Badakhshan, where he was patronised by a Badakhshi ruler (see Holzwarth 1994:12) and “became the founder and patron-saint of the Isma’ili community” (Madelung 1987:199). Holzwarth (1994:17-18) contends that the religious leadership of the Ismailis in Badakhshan around the eighteenth century rested with those families who were descendents of two former students of Nasir Khusraw. These descendents adhered not only to the Ismaili system of missionary titles but were also associated with Sufism (Holzwarth 1994:17-18).

The apparent synthesis of Sufi and Nizari Ismaili ideologies is attested to by the fact that Nizari Ismailis in Central Asia “use verses of the mystical poets of the Iranian world in their religious ceremonies, which are often akin to Sufi-

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29 The jamaat khanā is used for religious, communal and cultural activities by the Ismailis in Badakhshan and in the neighbouring regions of Gorno-Badakhshan and northern Pakistan (see Daftary 1998:218). The Ismaili community in Afghanistan has had virtually no contact with its Hazir Imam other than his fleeting visit to the Tajik/Afghan border across the Amu Darya in 1998 (the first visit to Gorno-Badakhshan occurred in 1995). As Badakhshan is economically isolated and was especially so during Afghanistan’s civil war (1978-2001), Ismaili artefacts were not for sale in the district bazaars of the Ismaili-inhabited regions in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999. In comparison, in nearby but – at that time – inaccessible Gorno-Badakhshan, paintings and pictures of Nasir Khusraw or of the Aga Khan were readily available and commonly adorned the walls of local jamaat khanas.

30 Aavani argues that Nasir Khusraw also acted as a court poet and would have written poems at that time with “eulogies of kings or other powerful peoples, or celebrations wine, women and other pleasures”. This poetry would have been destroyed upon his conversion (1977:2).

31 The Arabic noun hujja is from the Quran and means both “proof” as well as “presentation of proof” (IIS 2001). In Shiism, this term designates Prophets and Imams as “proof” of God’s presence on earth. In the Ismaili dawa of the pre-Fatimid and Fatimid periods, it was also applied to senior dais (missionaries) and in the Alamut period of Ismaili history it was used for those representing the Imam (see IIS 2001).
like dhikr incantations” (Daftary 1998:167). Furthermore, this Ismaili-Sufi convergence is particularly well elucidated in a source book on the cosmology of the Ismailis of the Pamir region by the Russian Andrej Bertel’s (1970:7):

A “Book of Spheres” (afaq-nama) from the Pamir mountain region cites ten attributes of an illuminated, that is, “inspired” soul (nafs-i mulhama): knowledge, wisdom, faith, understanding, loyalty, dancing and listening to music (raqis wa sama), enchantment (wajd), ecstasy (halat), adoption of the (godly) word (qabul-e sukhan).

Although this passage is not dated, it clearly refers to the performance of music and dance during traditional religious meetings. During my research in Badakhshan’s Ismaili-inhabited Pamir regions, dancing and listening to music were popular and revered practices and many of the attributes listed in the ‘Book of Spheres’ – knowledge, wisdom, faith, loyalty – were evident in the lyrics of the Ismaili music that I recorded. I suggest that this frequent recitation of classical mystical poetry, such as the ghazals of Rumi and the qasidas (odes) by Nasir Khusraw, during local music performances, is evidence of its continuing role as a vital literary and spiritual influence for these Ismaili communities. This will be further addressed in Chapters Six and Seven.

An historical account by Mahmud bin Wali, a court librarian during the Khanate of Balkh under the rule of Nadir Mohammad Khan (1606-1642, 1647-1651) in the seventeenth century, establishes a clear link between Nasir Khusraw and the importance of aesthetic practices in Ismailism (see Akhmedov and DeWeese 1991:162). Mahmud bin Wali’s encyclopedic work Bahr al-asrar fi manaqib al-akhyar (‘The Ocean of Secrets in the Accounts of the Noble’) was written between 1634-40 and describes his observation of devotees visiting Nasir Khusraw’s shrine in Hazrat-e Sayyid, central Badakhshan (see Map 3). This pilgrimage was undertaken to gain spiritual guidance and also to seek musical inspiration (see Akhmedov and DeWeese 1991:163; McChesney 1991:97; Wali 1977:88). In the shrine housing Nasir Khusraw’s tomb, Mahmud bin Wali noticed several musical instruments which Nasir Khusraw had instructed be used by devotees to perform his qasidas. These instruments included a doira (tambourine), sarghin (a reed instrument), rubab (short-necked lute), nay (flute), and tanbur (a long-necked, unfretted lute

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32 An example of this Sufi-Ismaili synthesis will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven with the song “Rawan”.
33 This passage is discussed in Holzwarth (1990:119-120n35) and has been translated by this author from German into English.
34 Badakhshan would have been a nominal appendage of the Khanate of Balkh.
35 According to Mahmud bin Wali (1977:89), by merely visiting the tomb, any novice musician would immediately have experienced an improvement in his technique.
with multiple melodic strings plus optional sympathetic strings).\textsuperscript{36} As will be described in subsequent chapters, two of these instruments that were observed in the seventeenth century are still played by the Badakhshi Ismailis: the \textit{doira} (locally also known as the \textit{daf}) and the \textit{rubab} (locally known as the six string Pamiri \textit{rubab}).\textsuperscript{37}

Time is a falcon, \textit{baz}, very predatory –
How can you play, \textit{baz}, with the falcon, \textit{baz}, of Time?

(Nasir Khusraw in Schimmel 1993:14).

Nasir Khusraw's use of the polysemous word \textit{bazi} (play) in this passage is ambiguous, since the Persian/Dari term may also refer to dance. The positioning of dance in Islam will now be discussed in relation to both normative and mystical Islam.

\textbf{Mystical Islam}

From the mid-eighth century, the heterodox tradition of Sufism has had a strong presence in the Muslim world, becoming especially common throughout the Middle East, Central and South Asia (see Shiloah 1995:40). During its formative period, Sufism had satisfied the desire of some disenchanted Sunnis for an alternative form of spiritual practice that enabled the experience of Islam in ways other than through the literal interpretation of the normative texts (see Trimingham 1998 (1971):133-139). While conservative Sunni jurists and clergy tended to regard the new mystical emphasis with suspicion, by “[w]orking from within Sunnism, Sufism appealed to a diversity of groups and provided the caliphate with a new form of social cohesion and control at the popular level” (Turner 1974:90). Hence, by the mid-ninth century onwards, Sufi doctrines gradually found their way into the teaching institutions of

\textsuperscript{36} I would like to thank Wolfgang Holzwarth, Berlin, for mentioning this article to me. The \textit{sarghin} is also referred to as \textit{karna} and is mentioned in Ferdowsi's \textit{Shahname} (1990 (1967)). This instrument is similar to a \textit{surnai} (a double reed instrument) that is commonly played in Central and South Asia. While the \textit{sarghin} was largely used as a military instrument during battle, a \textit{surnai} is performed during feasts and celebrations (Personal communication, Dr Mohammad Torabi, Canberra, 2002). Mahmud bin Wali may have referred to either the Afghan \textit{rubab}, a lute with four melodic strings and approximately fifteen sympathetic strings, or to a Pamiri \textit{rubab}, which has six strings and no sympathetic strings.

\textsuperscript{37} Whilst the \textit{tanbur} does not seem to be performed at present by Ismaili Badakhshis in Afghanistan, during my 1999 field trip to Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan, however, I met Ismaili \textit{tanbur} players in Dushanbe and Khorog.
orthodox Islam (see Crapanzano 1973:17) and in fact, it seems that as a consequence, orthodox Islam was revived (Turner 1974:90). Likewise, in Badakhshan, the marginally positioned Ismailis were not the only people attracted to Sufism’s heterodox doctrines, but a large percentage of the majority Sunnis were also drawn to Islamic mysticism. Indeed, during my fieldwork, the continuing popularity of Sufism in Badakhshan was evident in the public veneration of saints by both men and women at numerous ziarats (Sufi shrines), which are found throughout the province in almost every village and along many transport routes.38

Mystical Islam facilitated direct, individual communication with God, through esoteric and often non-verbal practices, while still maintaining a “harmonious relationship of belief, as outlined in Islam’s exoteric [normative] doctrine of the Shari’a” (Trimingham 1998 (1971):147). Spiritual enlightenment was thus sought through the establishment of a link between the sacred texts and acceptable communal practices. Trimingham (1998 (1971):147) elaborates on the embodied experience of mysticism:

The Truth which the seeker seeks is existential; it must be apprehended by the whole personality. The cognitive aspect, therefore, is mediated through its integral union with practice. Action, the song, exercise and dance, with the attendant symbolism, is the primary form of communication.

While Quranic recitations remained important elements of Sufi practice, the “often emotionally intense patterns of belief” (Eickelman 1998:282) could potentially lead a participant into religious ecstasy.39 Zikr, the repeated recitation of the name of God, became another central exercise.40 Later, aesthetic performances such as music and dance were introduced to accompany Sufi rituals (see Eickelman 1998:276), while some Sufis also advocated the practice of shahid, “the contemplation of a young man...[who is] believed somehow to represent or embody the Divine” (Crapanzano 1973:17).41 This latter practice will be elaborated upon in a later section of this chapter.

38 During my research trips, I observed that Sufi shrines were frequently venerated by local women, both with and without small children, as well as men, soldiers, and drivers. The only people who refrained from these practices were mujahideen belonging to conservative political factions which had been influenced by orthodox Sunni Islamic ideologies.

39 The Arabic term for ecstasy is wajd.

40 Sometimes transliterated as dhikr, zikr can be understood as the communal recitation or the “incessant ‘listening’ to such recitals” with the goal of achieving union with God (Endress 1988:55).

The mystical path of Sufism is taught in various orders, or dervish brotherhoods, many of which originated in Central Asia, especially between the Amu and Syr Darya, and were already established at the time of the Mongol invasions in the mid-thirteenth century (see Crapanzano 1973:17; Paul 1998:1). Sufi teaching centres and hostels attracted many artisans but were also patronised by the educated elite and gradually became organised into guilds (see Eickelman 1998:276). These Sufi organisations were “associated with \textit{tariqas} (spiritual paths) as naturally as with patron saints...[and] their tombs, [which served] as shrines, became centres for pilgrimage and marketing” (Hodgson 1960:894). Hodgson (1960:894) even suggests that Sufis became “effective missionaries in areas newly opened up to Muslim influence”, a role which previously, Ismaili \textit{dais} had fulfilled (see Turner 1974:91).

The geographic region of historic Khurasan stands out as a centre of Sufism, having produced some of the most respected Sufi orders, writers, poets, and theologians, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds. Sufi teachings and doctrines were originally transmitted as oral traditions from Sufi masters and later were also recorded in written texts (see Hourani 1991:74). In fact, much of the literature from the early Sufi era from approximately the early ninth century has been preserved (see Schimmel 1975:37-41; Trimingham 1998 (1971):166). This ‘tangible’ heritage is a rich source of philosophical and historical information, both about this era as well as Sufi thought and clearly demonstrates the ideological impact of Sufism “on the spiritual life of the Muslim world” (Canfield 1986:90).

The religious tradition of Sufism was also perceived to exercise considerable political influence. Its charismatic potential, “was regarded from the outset as politically suspect with political authorities sometimes using Sufi organizations for their own purposes or regarding them, often with cause, as being so used by others” (Eickelman 1998:276). A number of Sufi orders, for example, such as the Naqshbandiya and Qadiriya, have traditionally maintained close ties with ruling authorities in Afghanistan and more recently were actively engaged in

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42 The Syr Darya flows through contemporary Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
44 A \textit{tariqa} can be considered as a spiritual path, especially in the sense of following a particular saint. The term can also refer to a religious brotherhood (see Crapanzano 1973:239).
the *jihad* against the Soviet-backed Communist regime. From the fifteenth century, the Naqshbandiya order was one of the most powerful political and spiritual groups in Central Asia, establishing teaching centres in Herat and Samarkand, and also strongly represented in Balkh and Badakhshan (see Schimmel 1975:365; Wieland-Karimi 1998:2, 28). This order played a major role in Central Asian politics until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With the existence of four Naqshbandi *madrasas* that were supported through extensive awqaf (religious endowments such as land) in Badakhshan, Faizabad has served as a major Naqshbandi centre since at least the seventeenth century (see Holzwarth 1990:106n8). Grevemeyer (1982:143-144) cites a passage of the *Tarikh-e Badakhshan* (Boldirev 1959) in which the court of Amir Sultan Shah, the ruler of Badakhshan from approximately from 1747 to 1765/1770, is described as a centre of Naqshbandi learning. During that period, a number of well-known religious and secular scholars were in residence at the court including over four hundred dervishes, who were renowned for their singing and whose voices were at the disposal of the *Amir* and his Lahore-trained religious scholar. Schimmel (1975:365-366) categorises the Naqshbandiya as a “sober” Sufi order, in part because they refrain from any aesthetic performances, such as music and dance, during their religious practice of *sama* (listening). In order to differentiate their praxis from the term ‘orthodox’, which is usually applied to Sunni Muslims who adhere strictly to Islam’s normative texts, Wieland-Karimi (1998:30) prefers to call the Naqshbandiya an orthoprax order whose focus is the practice of *zikr* (silent praise of God). The main Naqshbandiya group in contemporary Afghanistan is the Mojadiddiya branch whose followers are descendents of the seventeenth century Indian scholars.

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45 As discussed in Chapter Four, the descendents of two important Sufi dynasties were leaders of moderate political parties during the *jihad*: Sebghatullah Mojadidi (Jabha-ye Melli Najat) from the Naqshbandiya order, and Sayyid Ahmad Gailani (Mahaz-e Melli Islami) from the Qadiriya Sufi order. The former President Burhanuddin Rabbani (1992-2001) is also thought to have links with the Naqshbandi Sufis (see Rubin 1995:218).

46 The Naqshbandiya order is named after the fourteenth century Baha al-Din Naqshband (1318-1389) from Bukhara in contemporary Uzbekistan (see Wieland-Karimi 1998:27).

47 Under the Moghul emperors, for example, Kabul became a centre of Naqshbandiya (Wieland-Karimi 1998:28).

48 *Sama* refers primarily to listening but may also include physical movements which are ritualistic in nature. This concept will be discussed in forthcoming sections of this chapter. The Arabic term for sober is *sahw* (Wieland-Karimi 1998:25).

49 Wieland-Karimi follows W. Cantwell Smith’s thesis that the term ‘orthodox’ does not appear in the languages of Muslims. Orthopraxy, therefore, describes “a commonality of practice and ritual” compared to orthodoxy, “the commonality of belief, on the grounds that Muslims share common rituals, even if they interpret them differently” (Eickelman 1998:254).
Naqshbandi Ahmad-e Sirhindi.\textsuperscript{50} Since the mid-eighteenth century, the Mojadiddi family has maintained a close relationship with the Afghan royal family through intermarriage and has been seriously involved in politics since the 1920s (see Olesen 1995:233).\textsuperscript{51}

Another Sufi order influential in Afghanistan is the Qadiriya which was popular during the Moghul period, especially in the mid-seventeenth century (Wieland-Karimi 1998:24) and whose pirs exerted considerable spiritual and political power.\textsuperscript{52} In comparison with the Qadiriya order which incorporated the ecstatic performance of music and dance into its Sufi praxis (see Tringham 1998 (1971):43n4), the Suhrawardiya, like the Naqshbandiya, are a "sober" (Schimmel 1975:195) and orthoprax order (Wieland-Karimi 1998:25) which generally does not condone aesthetic performances in conjunction with their religious activities.\textsuperscript{53} While the Suhrawardiya has also been actively engaged in political and social life in Afghanistan and has maintained good relations with ruling families, it has not reached the political prominence of the Naqshbandiya and the Qadiriya. In further contrast, the Chishtiya has kept a relatively low political profile, but has claimed tremendous popularity in the Indian subcontinent, especially among artisan communities, due to its emphasis on the performance of music and dance in

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\textsuperscript{50} Ahmad Sirhindir lived from 1563-1624. He was a pupil of the sixteenth century Khwaja Baqi Billah, who was thought to have introduced Naqshbandiya to India. Sirhindi’s conservative beliefs seem to have influenced later Moghul rulers. He was opposed to the veneration of Sufi saints at shrines and discouraged the religious syncretism that was popular under the rule of the Moghul Akbar (see Roy 1986:55; Wieland-Karimi 1998:28). According to Wieland-Karimi, Sirhindi was also initiated into the Qadiriya, Chishtiya and the Suhrawardiya orders (1998:29).

\textsuperscript{51} It is important to emphasise that the Mojadiddi family is not the only Naqshbandiya branch in Afghanistan.

\textsuperscript{52} This group was founded in Baghdad by Abdul Qadir Gailani (also spelt Gilani), who lived from 1077/78-1166 and was born in Gilan, a Persian town near the Caspian Sea (see Olesen 1995:46; Wieland-Karimi 1998:23-24). The current pîr, Sayyid Ahmad, was a religious adviser to Afghanistan’s last monarch, King Zahir Shah (see Wieland-Karimi 1998:123). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Qadiriya gained further prominence, especially among the Pushtun tribes of eastern Afghanistan, when Naqib Sahib, a brother of the order’s spiritual leader was invited, possibly by Amir Habibullah, to live in Chaharbagh in Nangarhar province (see Olesen 1995:46; Wieland-Karimi 1998:123). This particular branch of the Gailani family also established close contacts with the Afghan royal family through intermarriage. However, there are other branches of the Gailani family which are active in northern Afghanistan and which are independent of the Chaharbagh faction.

\textsuperscript{53} The Suhrawardiya order was founded by Abu Najib as-Suhrawardi in the twelfth century (died 1167), but developed further under his nephew Shihab al-Din as-Suhrawardi in the thirteenth century in Baghdad.
association with its practice of sama.\textsuperscript{54} Since the times of the Afghan Mohammadzai ruler Sher Ali Khan (1869-1879), the Chishtiya has exercised an extensive influence on the performance traditions of Afghanistan, especially in Kabul, where many followers such as professional musicians, were pivotal in the creation of national musical genres.\textsuperscript{55} Most Chishti Sufis live near Herat (Wieland-Karimi 1998:27), but since they were particularly targeted by the Taliban and consequently unable to openly practise their faith, many became refugees in Pakistan, predominantly in Peshawar.

Sufis have also traditionally placed considerable emphasis on the literary arts. \textit{Ziarats}, for example, have served as popular meeting places and as venues for picnics, particularly during the months of spring and often to commemorate religious or national festivals (Einzmann 1977:84-85). In this context, religious music but also love songs as well as dances were performed by the visitors to a shrine (Einzmann 1977:85). Indeed, for many centuries, the concept of mystical love has been a strong feature of Arab, Persian and Turkish poetry. Sufi poets are well known in Badakhshan and their poetry was often incorporated into the lyrics of local songs that were performed during my research. The thirteenth century poet and mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) while having a noticeable impact on Ismailis and Sufis, is also an important figure for many Sunni and Shiite Muslims in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{56} His poetry has been popular in the Indian subcontinent since the early fourteenth century (Arberry 1950: 119; Schimmel 1975:327) and English translations of Rumi’s works are now best-sellers in the Western world. Schimmel describes Rumi’s poetry as “a love experienced in human terms but completely grounded in God” (1975:324). Within the Islamic tradition, Rumi is probably the most

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\textsuperscript{54} This order is thought to have originated in Chisht, a village near Herat in western Afghanistan. Wieland-Karimi (1998:25) suggests that Muin al-Din Chishti (died 1236) introduced the order into India, while the Pakistani anthropologist Ahmad describes Abu Ishaq (died 941) as the founder of this order (1969:37). The centre of the Chishtiya order is in Ajmer, Rajasthan, India.  
\textsuperscript{55} The Afghan classical music tradition was influenced by Hindustani classical music. Sher Ali Khan, who ruled Afghanistan from 1863-1866 and 1868-1979, is thought to have been introduced to Hindustani classical musicians during his exile in India. Subsequently, in the second half of the nineteenth century, he invited musicians from India to travel to Kabul where they eventually settled in Kharabat, one of its suburbs (see Baily 1988:25; Sakata 1983:83-84).  
\textsuperscript{56} Rumi was born in Balkh, near contemporary Mazar-e Sharif. Rumi’s family travelled to Persia and Turkey in the thirteenth century, during which time he met another great Persian poet of the time, Farid al-Din Attar (circa 1145/6-1220/1) in Nishapur (see Wieland-Karimi 1998:38-39). Rumi reached his mystical pinnacle in Konya, central Anatolia (now Turkey), where in 1244, he met the dervish Shams al-Din Tabrizi, who subsequently became his spiritual guide and companion (see Schimmel 1975:313).
important and consistent advocate of aesthetic performances as vehicles to a mystical union with God. The aesthetic aspect of his teachings became known through the sacred dances of the ‘Whirling Dervishes’ of his Mevlevi (Schimmel 1975:309) order. The late seventeenth and early eighteenth century poet Mirza Abdul Bedil is also popular throughout Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent. While Turkestan is suggested as his birthplace (Wieland-Karimi 1998:39), most Badakhshi whom I interviewed believed that he was actually born in Argu, Badakhshan. Although Bedil did not directly belong to any of the Sufi orders previously mentioned, he was in contact with many Indian Sufi groups and was strongly influenced by Rumi (see Schimmel 1980:378). Several other major Sufi poets who have been of primary cultural significance in Badakhshan/Afghanistan will also be mentioned in the following discussion of the legality of music and dance.

**The Legality of Performance in Islam**

From the examination thus far, it is apparent that while the social actions of Muslims tend to be guided and evaluated by means of Islam’s normative texts, a desire for more personal religious experience and expression led to the development of mystical practice in the eighth/ninth century. At the same time, throughout Islamic history, the performance of cultural practices, which in some contexts were seen to be non-religious in nature, has been mostly frowned upon by orthodox Islamic factions due to their problematic status in their interpretations of the authoritative texts. Foremost amongst these concerns are the perceived potential of cultural practices to distract from the worship of God, to evoke immoral behaviour such as promiscuity, gambling, the consumption of alcohol or other illicit drugs, as well as mystical love for boys, in addition to their ability to lead to ecstatic and thus uncontrollable states (see al Faruqi 1985:189; Nasr 1997:221, 227; Shehadi 1995:5). Sport and, in particular, music and dance have thus become mired in controversy. Given that a number of sport and aesthetic practices that I witnessed in Badakhshan, and which will be discussed in subsequent chapters, were performed during

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57 Bedil lived from 1644 to 1721 and his tomb is located in Delhi. However, when I discussed the idea that Bedil was possibly born in Badakhshan with a *pir* of a Bedil-aligned *khanaqa* (Sufi brotherhood) in Peshawar in north-western Pakistan in 1998, he gave this belief some credibility and further remarked that for this reason, his brotherhood had a strong affinity with Badakhshan.

58 In medieval as well as in contemporary orthodox Christianity, some Christian groups have also opposed non-religious entertainment and aesthetic practices (see al Faruqi 1978:6).
non-religious events, discussion of the status of such performances in Muslim societies is clearly necessary.

Various views on aesthetics, particularly art, have prevailed at various times throughout Islamic history. Islamic art is undoubtedly a vast field and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to summarise its influences and perspectives. Although there are passages in the Quran that affirm aesthetic practices, more generally however, they are concerned with the emphatic rejection of “any form of religious image”, thus prohibiting the use of figural and iconic representation in any art form (al Faruqi 1985:17-18). While there are no passages in the Quran that can be clearly interpreted as banning the depiction of living beings (Hattstein and Delius:39), all sanctioned forms of aesthetic expression evince an intentional absence of figural representation to avoid any suspicion of the depiction of the human form, which may be perceived as a possible object of worship. In al Faruqi’s words, “the beautiful, the significant in art, therefore, has been for the Muslim not an aesthetical portrayal of humanity or human attributes, or of the truths of nature” (al Faruqi 1985:19).

This is largely a result of *tawhid* (the doctrine of the unity of God), a “peculiarly Islamic variety of monotheism...[that] precludes any confusion or absorption of the divine in the non-divine” (al Faruqi 1985:16-17). This in turn has led to a “transcendence-obsessed culture...through the creation of the beautiful, to stimulate in the viewer or listener an intuition of, or an insight into, the nature of Allah...and of man’s relation to Him” (al Faruqi 1985:19).

From a semiotic point of view, Islam prohibits any iconic signs which may imply a similarity or analogy to the divine. As a consequence, there is a noticeable lack of anthropomorphical representation in Islamic aesthetic traditions. The dogma of Islam’s aniconism has been to a large degree successfully implemented in most areas of the tangible arts, especially with the visual and decorative arts. Yet compliance with this doctrine has inevitably proven to be more difficult in the field of intangible arts including aesthetic performances. Dance is particularly problematic since the various images, forms and meanings inherent to this practice and its potential to evoke a range of mental and/or emotional associations may be construed as in some way signifying aspects of the divine or as representing objects of possible worship.

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59 According to the OED (1989-2002), aniconism may be understood as the application of “simple material symbols of a deity, as a pillar or block, not shaped into an image of human form; also to the worship connected with these...[as well as] the use of, or worship connected with, such symbols.”
It has thus tended to be perceived extremely negatively by Islamic jurists and clergy.

The definition of dance provided by al Faruqi (1978) emphasises the commonalities of dance in some Islamic societies. She suggests that the impact of the Islamic notion of *tawhid* and its dogma of aniconism is clearly reflected in the stylistic forms of dance which commonly utilise abstract and repetitious movements that do not necessarily aim to communicate a story (see al Faruqi 1978:6-7). Certainly, dances in Islamic societies do not usually follow a particular program or choreography. Instead, improvisation, mostly in the form of solo performances in which the arms play a dominant role, is more usually a predominant characteristic (see also Shay 1999). Nevertheless, when one considers the global nature of Islam, and also the diverse range of local, social, kinship, geographical, ethnic, Islamic sectarian, and even non-Islamic influences, it is important to ensure that one does not overdraw the extent of perceived similarities in the nature of dances in Islamic communities.

With respect to Persian poetry and the Sufi concept of mystical love, Schimmel (1995:415) clarifies how dance may have been perceived from philosophical and poetic perspectives by medieval Islamic jurists and scholars. She describes dance in Islamic cultures as an “epi-phenomenon to music or melodious recitation” and hence relegates it to a secondary and even subordinate role. This is however a rather debatable argument. Indeed, it would be quite feasible to alternatively consider dance to be the primary action and music as the secondary accompaniment, or further, to view the whole as one aesthetic performance.

Since the beginning of the Islamic era, cultural performances have been a constant and often essential feature of ruling Muslim elites. The first caliphs, for example, are thought to have been “enthusiastic supporters of art music,
[and to have regarded it as] an integral part of their regal life" (Shiloah 1995:20). It seems that the Fatimid caliphs (910-1094) were also fond of entertainment in the form of “musicians, singing-girls, [and] dancers” (Shiloah 1995:71). Moreover, during this period, performances at private and public celebrations were not only enjoyed by the elite court families, but by all groups in Islamic societies who engaged in such practices under the pretexts of agricultural festivals, rites of passage and preparation for war (see Hourani 1991:198). These performances would most likely have included autochthonous elements as well as influences from other ethnic groups and neighbouring regions. From approximately the eleventh century, dance was rarely directly discussed by medieval Muslim scholars, but tended to be subsumed by the category of “the partaking in games, as mere play and diversion” (Shehadi 1995:5). This classification implies that even in this early Islamic period, dance as a form of play was typically a form of amusement and entertainment. As has already been established, dancing was a central feature of some Sufi practices. Yet while a lively debate about the legality of Sufi practices did emerge in this era, this was mostly concerned with the performance of music with, at best, fleeting remarks about the role of dance.

The broad categorisation of the cultural performances of music, dance and sport reflects terminological difficulties for these practices in the languages of Arabic or Persian. The Arabic term *lahw* was used in early Islamic texts to describe performances encompassing a range of activities such as dance, music, play, gambling, sports, entertainment, and amusement (see al Faruqi 1985:178; Roychoudhury 1957:61, 64; Shehadi 1995:100, 112). This polysemic term undoubtedly compounded the ambiguity of performance, creating difficulties for orthodox jurists and scholars in delineating between the nature and hence legalities of various genres of performance. Recent scholars have continued to use the term *lahw* mainly with respect to music (al Faruqi 1985; Roychoudhury 1957; Shehadi 1995), but it is feasible to broaden its definition to include dance (Shehadi 1995:112). In fact, Al Faruqi argues that the correct translation of *lahw* actually appears to be closer to the term ‘secular entertainment’ (1985:178) and frequently, though not inevitably “associated with drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, and the dissolute life” (al Faruqi 1985:189). Hence, the term *lahw* does not address performance in a religious

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63 Nasir Khusraw witnessed some of these performances and recorded them in his *Safarnama* (‘Travelogue’) during his extended stay in Cairo (see Hunsberger 2000:3). For example, he commented on the Caliph’s tolerance for “pictures of dancing-girls in his vizier’s [minister’s] dwelling” (Khusraw 1881:128, 137; cited in Shiloah 1995:71).
context which may or may not have aesthetic value. Furthermore, there do not appear to be any consistent or clear rules with regard to the legality of *lahw* in the normative texts (see Roychoudhury 1957:64).

The difficulties encountered in academic discourse when attempting to define the genre and practice of dance are accentuated when discussing these genres in Islamic societies since there are no exact equivalent terms for ‘music’ or ‘dance’ in either Arabic or Persian. The closest approximations to the Western concept of music are *ghina* which refers more to singing, and *sama* which is a specific expression related to Sufi religious practice and which really refers to listening. Consequently, the word *musiqi* is often used as an equivalent term for Western music (Shehadi 1995:7), and is understood as excluding such religious music as the Quranic chant and the adhan, as well as the chanted formulae of the dhikr service, madih and hamad...In its more limited sense, *musiqi* pertains only to the theoretical, as distinguished from the practical art of music (*ghina*). To add to the confusion, *ghina* has also been used to denote vocal, as distinguished from instrumental music (al Faruqi 1979:58).

In Dari-speaking Afghanistan, two terms may be used to describe dance: the Persian *bazi*, a polysemic term which commonly means ‘to play’ and often has “a slightly mischievous connotation” (Baily 1988:140-1), and the Arabic *raqs* which always refers to dance. However, the ethnomusicologist Fadlou Shehadi (1995:142) posits that the Arabic word *raqs* is also connected with the concept of “play-dance”. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that the labelling of aesthetic performances during the early Islamic period may have been driven by “extra-logical, extra-conceptual considerations” (Shehadi 1995:142) wherein religious authorities were interested in “creating a semantical chasm between...religious ‘dance’ and the *raqs* that is associated with shere amusement” (Shehadi 1995:142). This allowed orthodox jurists to condemn dance as non-religious entertainment, whilst tacitly condoning the religious – albeit controversial – practice of dance that had gained popularity among the Sufi orders.

Hence, although two terms exist for dance (*raqs* and *bazi*), the lack of clarity in terms of the interpretations of dance by orthodox jurists has meant that it is

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64 One only has to the think of the commemorative Shiite passion play *taziyeh* which is normally performed during the tenth day of the lunar month of Moharram to mark the martyrdom of Hussain, the grandson of the prophet Mohammad, who was murdered in Kerbela, contemporary Iraq, during this month in 680 (see Chelkowski 1979:1-2).

65 Rumi, for example, uses the terms *raqs* and *pa kuftan* (literally ‘tap dancing’) to describe dance (see Chittick 1983:325).
never entirely clear whether these two terms are being used to refer to dancing of a religious or non-religious nature. This lack of clarity is exemplified in the classification by some Islamic and many Western scholars of the whirling movements of the dervishes as ‘dance’. When reflecting upon the general classification of dance as outlined in Chapter Two, these activities are dances, but more specifically they may be understood as aesthetic performances that bear religious meaning. Yet what is critical for the dervishes themselves is that such performances are sacred practices, and for this reason, Sufis most commonly do not view them as raqs or dance (see Shay 1995:68-69).

Like all social actions, the meaning and legality of dance is derived from interpretations of Islam’s divine and authoritative texts, the Quran, together with Sharia law and the collections of hadith. However, in spite of claims to the contrary by ultra-conservative or extremist Islamic factions, the normative texts in Islam are not “prescriptive in simple ways” (Fischer and Abedi 1990:147) and not surprisingly, “conflicting attitudes on the doctrinal level” (Shiloah 1995:34) are widespread among Islamic theologians and scholars, especially in relation to the hadith. Conservative scholars such as the fourteenth century Syrian Hanbalite jurist Ibn Taymiyya (died 1328), usually refer to two sections in the Quran in their condemnation of dance: Sura 17 al-Isra:37, “Do not walk proudly on the earth”, and Sura 31 Luqman:19, “Rather let your gait be modest”. Sura 8 al-Anfal:35, which denounces handclapping and whistling, is also occasionally used as further evidence of the impermissibility of aesthetic practices (see Schimmel 1995:415). Strictly adhering to these orthodox interpretations, the Taliban banned clapping and whistling during sporting events such as soccer games and condoned only the chanting of Allah-u Akbar (God is Great) (see Chapter Six and Reuters 2001). Nevertheless, the ambiguity of these Suras means that conclusive statements about the permissibility of aesthetic practices are difficult to readily draw. As Sharia law also fails to address directly the performance of dance and music, orthodox jurists generally consult the collections of hadith for advice on the legal ramifications of these practices. However, the interpretation of the hadith immediately introduces other difficulties, including

66 The Hanbal school of jurisprudence is named after the traditionalist jurist Ibn Hanbal (died 855) and teaches one of the most conservative forms of Islam. Hanbali jurisprudence is the official school of law in Saudi Arabia (Netton 1992:95-96).
67 All quotations from the Quran that appear in this thesis are taken from The Koran, translated by N. J. Dawood (1976).
68 Sura 8 al-Anfal:35 “Their prayers at the Sacred House are nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. They shall be punished for their unbelief” (Dawood 1976).
challenges of the ideological, legal, or political outcomes, of gaining a consensus and thereby formulating history among those skilled enough to point out weaknesses in chains...of narration, contradictions or anachronisms in the texts of the alleged narrations (Fischer and Abedi 1990:125).

With numerous collections of hadith in existence and a lack of consensus on often-controversial interpretations, the legality of aesthetic performances has thus frequently been dependent upon the whims of those jurists or clergy with the authority to interpret hadith. To further complicate matters, however, hadith are themselves categorised by orthodox authorities in terms of their degrees of reliability:

- if all links in the chains [of the hadith] are reliable, the hadith is graded sahih ('correct'); several independent reliable chains make it mutawātir ('confirmed'), the highest grade. Below these two grades, hadith may be evaluated as maqūl ('acceptable' only because a faqīh [jurist] has issued a fatwa based upon it), hasan ('good,' but not fully reliable), mursal (lacking connected chains), da'if ('weak'), or maj'ūl ('fabricated') (Fischer and Abedi 1990:125).

Conflicting interpretations of the legality of dance have therefore been virtually unavoidable. During the medieval period, dance was the victim of a general mistrust of non-religious performances which derived from the negative contexts in which music was mentioned in the hadith. Inevitably, however, the physical nature of dance and its potential for sensuality made it particularly controversial. From medieval times, conservative jurists have associated it with the sinful activities of sexuality, sensuality, passion, and addictive behaviour, and as a consequence, dancing has often been regarded as a greater evil than music and has been tacitly if not explicitly banned in orthodox Islam. At the same time, medieval Arab and Persian writers took a philosophical interest in the legality of aesthetic performances, primarily as a result of the increasing popularity of Sufi orders, many of whose religious practices incorporated music and dance.

One of the earliest supporters of aesthetic performances was the ninth century Persian poet Yahya ibn Muaz who discusses the ritual of dancing in poetic form (see Schimmel 1975:183).

The truth we have not found;  
so dancing, we beat the ground!  
Is dancing reproved in me  
who wander reproved from Thee?

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69 Yahya ibn Muaz was from Rayy near Tehran but resided temporarily in Balkh. He died in Nishapur (contemporary Iran) in approximately 871-72 (see Schimmel 1975:51).
The tenth/eleventh century Persian Sufi poet Abu Said was another early medieval advocate of dance for whom ecstatic dancing to music was the essence of religious practice; he was known to promote dancing among his disciples (see Nicholson 1921:61). Sufism's "ritualised worship of God" (Endress 1988:55) utilised practices such as zikr and sama as well as the performance of dance and music which often led to ecstasy. While the Arabic term sama does not appear in the Quran, this practice has particular significance in mystical Islam and in most Sufi texts, and is discussed with reference to the English terms 'music' and 'listening', in the sense of "hearing music" and "the music that is heard" (Shiloah 1995:31). However, sama may be best understood as the "creation of a specific liturgy, composed of prayer, litanies, singing, music and sometimes dance" (Lewisohn 1997:1). The role of the performance of physical movements or dance during this practice is highlighted in Rudolf Sellheim's (1995:1018) explanation of sama as the 'nourishment of the soul',...a devotional practice which...can induce intense emotional transports...states of grace...of trance or of ecstasy...and even revelations. These manifestations are often accompanied by movements, physical agitation or dance which are of set form or otherwise, individual or collective.

Debates as to the legitimacy of sama occurred from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries and centred on whether it could be sanctioned by the normative texts (see Nicholson 1921:34). Supporters usually refer to the incident in which Abu Bakr overheard two female servants singing in the house of Aisha, the third wife of the Prophet, during a holiday. Abu Bakr immediately prohibited their actions, whereas the Prophet, who was also present, demonstrated a more tolerant attitude towards their performance, responding "to let them be, for each people has its own feasts" (Shehadi 1995:97). Opponents of sama, such as Ibn Taymiyya (1966:301-302), do not concur with this interpretation, but assert that while the Prophet may have heard the sound of the singing, he most certainly would not have intentionally listened to it. Chapter Four has already discussed how the works of Ibn Taymiyya were a source of primary inspiration not only for the Taliban militia,
but also for the extremist Islamist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of the Hezb-e Islami, as well as for other commanders influenced by Wahhabism.

It is possible however that sama may have originally been performed after religious practices, and marked by feasting, drinking, music, dancing, and flirtation with the young adolescents who sang and served refreshments (see Ritter 1955:491-492; Wafer 1997:111). Nevertheless, Rumi describes sama as an entirely sacred experience which inspires dancing: “The dancing lover is higher than the spheres, for the call to sama‘ comes from Heaven” (Schimmel 1975:183-184). 72 His emphasis on the close association between divine intoxication and dance is evinced in the following examples of his verses: 73

It is a day of joy. Come, let us all be friends!
Let us take each other by the hand and go to the Beloved.

When we become stupefied in Him and are all one color, let us keep going, dancing, toward the bazaar.

It is a day for all the beauties to dance – let us close down our shops and all be idle.

It is a day for the spirits to wear robes of honor – let us go as God’s guests to the mysteries.

It is a day when idols are setting up tents in the garden – let us go to the rose garden and gaze upon them!


Bring the cup from early morning like the sun, for it has taught every mote of me to dance.


The heavens are like a dancing dervish-cloak, but the Sufi is hidden. Oh Moslems, who has ever seen a cloak dance without a body within it?

The cloak dances because of the body, the body because of the spirit, and love for the Beloved has tied the spirit’s neck to the end of a string.


72 Schimmel cites here a passage from Rumi’s Mathnawi (1975:183-184).
73 These four sections are translated by and cited in Chittick (1983:327, 328, 186).
No one dances until he sees Thy Gentleness –
Thy Gentleness makes infants dance in the womb.

What is so special about dancing in the womb
or in nonexistence? Thy Light makes bones dance in the grave!

We have danced much over the veils of this
world – become nimble, oh friends,
for the sake of the dance of that other world!


The writings of the eleventh century Chishti Sufi al-Hujwirī clearly
differentiate between the ecstatic movements of Sufi practices and the
performances of music and dance outside of the sacred realm:
[d]ancing has no foundation in the religious law or in the path...But since ecstatic
movements and the practices of those who endeavour to induce ecstasy resemble it,
some frivolous imitators have indulged in it immoderately and have made it a
religion. I have met with a number of common people who adopted Sufism in the
belief that it is this dancing and nothing more...It is more desirable that beginners
should not be allowed to attend musical concerts lest their natures become depraved

His views are shared by many Sufis who are concerned with the practice of
sama by novices.

Another eleventh century theologian, religious reformer and Sufi, Abû Hâmid
al-Ghazâlî (1058-1111), attempted to reconcile Sufism with normative Islam in
his Ihyâ‘ ulûm al-dîn (‘The Revival of the Religious Sciences’) (al-Ghazâlî,
1933; Shiloah, 1995:43). Emphasising that all practices should aim to bring a
believer closer to God, he discusses not only those actions “which bind human
beings to each other: eating and drinking, marriage, the acquisition of material
goods, listening to music” (Hourani 1991:169), but the aesthetic practices of
music and singing wherein a believer’s “heart reveals itself and its contents”
(Shiloah 1995:43). 75 In terms of the legality of aesthetic performances, al-
Ghazâlî distinguishes between permissible and impermissible practices, basing
his support for the legality of aesthetic performances on the earlier-mentioned
example of the Prophet’s tolerance of singing at Aisha’s house (see

75 While Shiloah refers only to the practices of music and singing, it seems appropriate to
extend al-Ghazâlî’s concept to include aesthetic performances in general.
Al-Ghazālī classifies music into the following categories,

\begin{enumerate}
\item as sports (Lahw...) [which] is unlawful because it creates disturbances, ...as delight (Ladhīḥat...) ...[as it has a] source of delight of sense, pure and simple [; and, lastly, as] good (Mubah...) because the Prophet has set an example by enjoying it himself and allowing others to enjoy it.\footnote{Al-Ghazālī (in Shiloah 1995:44) suggests that aesthetic actions are acceptable under the following conditions: to encourage pilgrimage, but only for those for whom pilgrimage is permissible; to incite to battle; to inspire courage on the day of the battle; to evoke lamentation and sorrow...; to arouse joy; to elicit love and longing, in circumstances that permit singing and playing instruments; or to evoke love of God. Moreover, al-Ghazālī regards the performance of Abyssinian acrobats and musicians as legitimate and firmly believes that this type of sport would have included music and dance in its program (see Macdonald 1901-1902:243). Music, however, is clearly not permissible “when produced by women under certain conditions; if the instruments used are prohibited; when the song’s contents are not compatible with the spirit and precepts of religion; when the listener is ruled by lust; or if one listens to music for its own sake” (Shiloah 1995:44).}
\end{enumerate}

While one may extend this categorisation to encompass dance, in another passage, al-Ghazālī directly refers to dance as lahīw (sport):

\begin{quote}
[If] ash-Shafi’i [the Islamic jurist] says that it is a sport which is disliked and which resembles what is vain, then his saying ‘sport’ (lahw)...is right, but sport, in respect that it is sport, is not unlawful; the play of the Abyssinians [who performed for Aisha, the wife of the Prophet] and their dancing is sport, yet the Prophet was wont to look at it sometimes and did not dislike it...[and] when God does not blame for the mention of His name to a thing by way of oath without being pledged to it and without being determined to keep it, rather being variable as to it, along with there being no advantage in it, how shall He blame poetry and dancing (Macdonald 1901-1902:243)?
\end{quote}

Although dance is not seen to be an inappropriate activity, al-Ghazālī suggests that it is a lesser form of amusement, since it is associated with sport and engaged in as a form of entertainment. Dance, therefore, should not necessarily be performed by “notable people” (Macdonald 1901-1902:8-9):

\begin{quote}
And in a tradition it is said the he [the Prophet] said to Ā’isha, “Wouldst thou like to look at the kicking out” and “kicking out” and “hopping” are dancing....If the pleasure which causes dancing is praiseworthy, and the dancing increases and strengthens it, then the dancing is praiseworthy. And if the one is permissible, then the other is permissible, and if blameworthy, blameworthy. Yet, it is true that the practice of dancing does not befit the station of notable people or people who set an example, because, for the most part, it springs from sport and play, and that which has the aspect of play and sport in the eyes of the people should be avoided by him whose actions are imitated in order that he may not become small in the eyes of the people and they should leave off imitating him (Macdonald 1901-1902:8-9).
\end{quote}
In Macdonald’s (1901-1902:28) summary of the translation of Iḥyā’ ʿulūm ad-dīn, he trenchantly remarks that the “suitableness of dancing generally depends on circumstances and the dancer. An allowable thing to one man may not be allowable to another. Legally, dancing is not forbidden”. Liberal Muslims in contemporary societies seem to adhere to al-Ghazālī’s recommendations re: legality, wherein a performance must be interpreted with respect to its context; it therefore cannot be absolutely prohibited or condoned. As Macdonald (1901-1902:28) remarks in the case of aesthetic practices, the “listening to Music and Singing is sometimes forbidden, sometimes disliked, sometimes loved. All depends on him who listens”.

Many Islamic scholars believe that Ahmad al-Ghazālī, the younger brother of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, was even more specific about the legitimacy of Sufi dance.\textsuperscript{78} In his Bawārīq al-ilmī (‘Lightening Flashes’), he mentions that ecstasy could be achieved during a sama session involving prayer, zikr, and the singing of Sufi poems, and which is then followed by “three physical techniques: dance, whirl and jump” (Trimingham 1998 (1971):195-196). Each physical movement during this practice signifies spiritual meaning:

\emph{The dancing is a reference to the circling of the spirit round the cycle of existing things on account of receiving the effects of the unveilings and revelations; and this is the state of the gnostic. The whirling is a reference to the spirit’s standing with Allah in its inner nature (sirr) and being (wujūd), the circling of its look and thought, and its penetrating the ranks of existing things; and this is the state of the assured one. And his leaping up is a reference to his being drawn from the human station to the unitive station (al-Ghazālī, 1938:99-100).}\textsuperscript{79}

The philosophy of Ahmad al-Ghazālī was strongly inspired by other mystics and Sufi groups. In turn, one of his disciples, Abu Najib as-Suhrawardi, later became the founder of the Suhrawardi order discussed earlier. Both the Chishtiya and Mevlevi Sufi orders also drew on the teachings of Ahmad al-Ghazālī as well as Rumi’s vision of mystical performances, and integrated aesthetic actions into their Sufi praxis (see Schimmel 1975:327; Schimmel 1995:416). The Mevlevi was founded after Rumi’s death in 1273 by his son Sultan Walad (see Wieland-Karimi 1998:38-39), who took the aspect of sacred

\textsuperscript{78} Ahmad al-Ghazālī died between 1121-1126 (see Shehadi 1995:153). Leonard Lewisohn (1997:4610) argues that Ahmad al-Ghazālī has been confused with the Sufi Ahmad bin Mohammad al-Tusi and has been incorrectly cited as the author of the Bawārīq al-ilmī by James Robson in his edition of “Tracts on Listening to Music”. While I will continue to cite Ahmad al-Ghazālī as the author as it appears in the literature, I would like to alert the reader to this potential inaccuracy.

performance even further by institutionalising dance which accompanied by music, became the order’s central means of achieving union with God.\textsuperscript{80}

The medieval jurist Ibn Taymiyya was a vehement opponent of Sufi orders and their practices. Indeed, his attack on aesthetic practices seems to have been mainly directed against Sufism, which he viewed as illegitimate (see Tringham 1998 (1971):242). In contrast with the contextual approach of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and related writers, Ibn Taymiyya (1966:309) urged Muslims always to be directed by the normative texts, and failing that, to be guided through the interpretations of the companions of the Prophet and their immediate successors. He espoused the idea that God, the Prophet and his close successors did not condone dance and based this position on Suras 17 al-Isra:37 and 31 Luqman:19 (see above as well as Shehadi 1995:109-110). Moreover, he ardently opposed the practice of \textit{sama}, judging “anyone who practised \textit{sama}...[to be] an infidel and polytheist” (Shiloah 1995:35). Related to this, he emphasised the need to differentiate between the \textit{sama} that profits one in religion, and the \textit{sama} which is allowed for lack of prohibition; [and] between the \textit{sama} of the close companions and that of the amusement seekers” (1966:295).\textsuperscript{81} Hence, while recognising the desire of all Muslims to draw closer to God, Ibn Taymiyya did not see that this goal was furthered by the practice of \textit{sama} and the inclusion of aesthetic performances (Shehadi 1995:96).\textsuperscript{82} Yet, the strongest attack against Sufism and its incorporation of aesthetic practices was written in the twelfth century by the conservative Baghdadi Hanbali jurist Ibn al-Jawzi.\textsuperscript{83} In almost half of his book \textit{Talbis iblis} (‘The Devil’s Delusion’), Ibn al-Jawzi vehemently condemns Sufis for their divergences from his conceptualisation of authentic Islamic law (see Tringham 1998 (1971):242). Stating that it is “unlawful to dance like beasts and applaud like women” (Shehadi 1995:112), Ibn al-Jawzi describes dancing as “a demon-inspired, ‘immoral’ activity” (Schimmel 1995:416).

As this overview has shown thus far, the legality of dance in Islamic societies remains inconclusive. The mere fact that medieval Islamic jurists debated the legality of aesthetic practices indicates that music and dance performances

\textsuperscript{80} Rumi’s literary masterpiece the \textit{Mathnawi} (‘Spiritual Couplets’), for example, is of central importance to the Chishtiya Sufi ideology (see Schimmel 1980:375).

\textsuperscript{81} This quote is cited in Shehadi (1995:95).

\textsuperscript{82} Ibn Taymiyya even included the term dance in the title of his essay \textit{Kitāb al-samā' wa'l-raqs} (‘The Book of Audition and Dance’), yet he only debated the legality of dance very briefly (see Ibn Taymiyya 1966:309; Shehadi 1995:109).

\textsuperscript{83} Ibn al-Jawzi died 1200.
occurred during that era (see al Faruqi 1978; 1979; Shehadi 1995; Shiloah 1979). Sufi dances are also depicted in the art form of Persian miniatures from that period (see Schimmel 1995:416). It seems likely that in order to accommodate the controversial but increasingly popular Sufi practices which incorporated the performance of music and dance, a compromise was made by many orthodox Islamic jurists. Their subsequent categorisation of performances as ‘religious’ and ‘non-religious’, however, while aiming to differentiate between practices, fails to effectively demarcate between them. In fact, many aesthetic performances combine elements of both categories and are consequently positioned on a continuum between these seemingly opposite poles.

For the most part, if an aesthetic performance occurs within the context of religious practice, it tends to be sanctioned or at least tolerated, whereas aesthetic performances which are deemed to be ‘non-religious’, are generally prohibited. Hence, Sufi music and dancing have generally been tacitly condoned by orthodox scholars, since these practices occur within a religious framework that emphasises esoteric knowledge and a direct encounter with God. At the same time, it is important to recognise that many orthodox clergy do not approve of either ‘religious’ aesthetic performances or Sufism. Nevertheless, in spite of their controversial status, music and dance – in both religious and non-religious capacities – have been popular activities in Muslim societies. Wedding dances, for example, are commonly accepted by orthodox Muslims as permissible practices largely because they are not categorised as a form of entertainment. Instead, these aesthetic performances tend to be acknowledged as a ‘necessary family practice’ during the rite of passage of a wedding, which is sanctioned by Islam.

Through the creation of a model that categorises the legitimacy of various types of music, Lois al Faruqi (1985:179) attempts to explain the importance of aesthetic practices to sacred performances in Islam. Seeking to avoid the connotations of the English concept of ‘music’, she uses a neologism, handasah al sawt (The Artistic Engineering of Sound) to refer to a “hierarchy of sound-art expression” (al Faruqi 1985:178) (see Table 1).84

If one were to apply al Faruqi’s classification to dance, then any dance that occurs in the course of entertainment during a party or a private function would

84 This term can also be translated as the “artistic engineering of sound” (al Faruqi 1985:186).
be categorised as illegitimate or *haram* (see al Faruqi 1985:179). For that matter, any dance that may be associated with pre-Islamic or non-Islamic traditions would also be branded *haram*. However, as a result of the often-ambiguous positioning of aesthetic performances on the continuum of religious/non-religious practices, they may be variously interpreted by ruling authorities or clergy with respect to the categories listed in Table 1. In most cases therefore, dancing is not “expressly forbidden” (Adamec 2001:78) but, instead, categorised as *makruh* (reprehensible), which again confirms its ‘in between’ status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of musical practices</th>
<th>In orthodox Islam perceived as</th>
<th>According to Sharia and the hadiths considered as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quranic chant (<em>qiraah</em>)</td>
<td>non-musiqi (non-music)</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to prayer (<em>azan</em>)</td>
<td>non-musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage chants</td>
<td>non-musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eulogy chants (<em>madah, nat, etc.</em>)</td>
<td>non-musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanted poetry (<em>sher</em>)</td>
<td>non-musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and celebration music (lullabies, wedding songs, etc.)</td>
<td>musiqi (music)</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Occupational” music (caravan chants, shepherd’s tunes, work songs, etc.)</td>
<td>musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military band music</td>
<td>musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal</em> (legitimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal/instrumental improvisations (e.g., <em>qasida</em>)</td>
<td>musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal, mubah, makruh, haram</em> (controversial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious metered songs</td>
<td>musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal, mubah, makruh, haram</em> (controversial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music related to pre-Islamic or non-Islamic origin</td>
<td>musiqi</td>
<td><em>halal, mubah, makruh, haram</em> (controversial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensuous music</td>
<td>musiqi</td>
<td><em>haram</em> (illegitimate)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Perceptions of music in an Islamic context (adapted from al Faruqi 1985:179).
The fact that this discussion of the legality of aesthetic practices has implicitly and virtually exclusively been concerned with the performances of men and boys is due to a number of factors. Firstly, Sufi praxis traditionally incorporates male dances only. Secondly, as a male researcher, I had access solely to the male domain in Badakhshan. And thirdly, with the exception of the Western preoccupation with raqs al-sharqi (belly dancing), both Islamic and academic literatures are virtually silent about the nature and role of women’s dance in Islamic societies. Undoubtedly, Muslim women and girls also dance, notably during wedding celebrations. However, these performances occur mostly within the confines of the female domains of their residences to which males usually have no access.

Like dance and music, gender and sexuality tend to be rather ambiguous categories in Islamic cultures and naturally, do not necessarily communicate the same meanings as the equivalent terms in Western discourses. A performer’s gendered body may thus be understood as bearing specific meaning in an Islamic context (see Butler 1988:521). Both Arab and Persian poetry are pregnant with images of youth, beauty, sensuality, and sexuality (see Roscoe and Murray 1997:7; Wafer 1997:113). These images may be understood as metaphors for divine love or may symbolise the profane love for a male or female. While in Arabic poetry the link between a male and God is “expressed in metaphors of man’s longing for a beautiful maiden” (Schimmel 1982:151), in Persian poetry the relationship is “symbolized in the love between a man and a beautiful youth” (Wafer 1997:113), with frequent allusions to images of the adoration of young, beardless males. Indeed, the symbolic references to mystical love as well as to the beauty and purity portrayed by a young male are recurring themes in Sufi poetry, and may be thought to describe “the soul’s longing for God” (Olesen 1995:18). Relatedly, the performances of dancing boys while controversial and often questioned as to their sexual morality, have rarely been entirely prohibited by orthodox Islamic jurists. In the absence of Islamic scholars’ direct discussion of such performances, Western scholars, influenced by Eurocentric constructs of sexuality and sensuality, have often misconstrued the ambiguous and often allegorical images of sexuality and gender inherent in these performances.

The concept of mystical love, is not unique to Islam; it has also appeared in Christian literature. In Christianity, however, the gender of the mythical love relationship seems to be more clearly defined as heterosexual (see Wafer 1997:107).
One of the challenges of exploring the concepts of gender and sexuality in Persian-speaking territories arises from Persian grammar which does not clearly distinguish between ‘genders’ in a grammatical sense and ‘gender’ in a socio-cultural context. While some translators such as Chittick (1983) have resolved this dilemma by opting to define many nouns as grammatically feminine, in theory, a noun may be translated as indicating either gender. As one may also predict, ‘sexuality’ in Islam does not hold the same meaning as in contemporary Western discourses where it has tended to be categorised into the binary fields of homosexuality and heterosexuality. It is of course also important to remember that there was not a “cultural conception of homosexual types before late-nineteenth century medical discourse created one in northern Europe” (Murray 1997:29). Colloquially in Afghanistan, the terms bache bazi (literally ‘the act of engaging boys to dance’ or ‘playing with boys’) and zanaka bazi (engaging in an extramarital affair) are used to distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual liaisons (see Baldauf 1988:5). However, these constructs are clearly not sufficient to enable an understanding of sexuality in Islam, especially in traditional Muslim societies where sexuality is inextricable from the role of the family. The Islamic ideal of marriage, particularly in traditional societies, is to marry early, primarily in order to procreate and then, secondarily, to achieve sexual harmony with one’s spouse. Lindholm (1996:247, 252) argues that rather than Islam itself, it is largely this social organisation which includes the extended family unit and consists of arranged marriages with an emphasis on reproduction, that is responsible for the ambiguity of heterosexual desire in Muslim societies. In fact, male friendships or mystical love for a young boy, as alternatives to heterosexual desire, are generally seen to be of secondary importance since they do not threaten the family structure. Moreover, such practices may even be understood to bear religious meaning and to facilitate spiritual advancement.

As “practitioners of a spiritual method”, Sufis consider themselves to be “lovers” who attain a spiritual experience of the divine through the practice of sama (see Wafer 1997:110). For many Sufis, sama includes the participation of “charming young boys” (Schimmel 1975:181). This form of homoeroticism has been a contentious issue for orthodox Islamic jurists and as it has often been thought to be associated with dancing, the latter has consequently been

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86 In Persian, the third personal pronoun (he/she/it) is neutral and is transliterated as u and may thus refer to either sex (see Appendix Two).
87 In Afghanistan, it is extremely difficult for men to engage in extramarital heterosexual activities and female prostitution is relatively rare (see Baldauf 1988:21-22).
deemed impermissible (see Roychoudhury 1957:100; Wafer 1997:119). A tradition of mystical love seems to have been well-established during the Islamic medieval period. The twelfth century Persian poet Ruzbihan Baqli emphasises three features that are essential for spiritual enjoyment in the practice of *sama*: “fine scents, a beautiful face to look at, and a lovely voice—the beauty of the singer...[being] a prerequisite for spiritual happiness” (Schimmel 1975:182). Another Persian mystic and poet Abu Said, was once asked about his *sama* practice in which he encouraged “young men to dance and sing” (Nicholson 1921:57). Abu Said countered the accusation by remarking that religious dancing may actually safeguard a youth from engaging in otherwise ‘immoral’ activities:

> [T]he souls of young men are not yet purged of lust: indeed it may be the prevailing element; and lust takes possession of all the limbs. Now, if a young dervish claps his hands, the lust of his hands will be dissipated, and if he tosses his feet, the lust of his feet will be lessened. When by this means the lust fails in their limbs, they can preserve themselves from great sins, but when all lusts are united (which God forfend!), they will sin mortally. It is better that the fire of their lust should be dissipated in the *sama*’ than in something else (Nicholson 1921:57-58).

One of the most passionate statements about mystical love comes from the thirteenth century Sufi Awhad al-Din Kirmani. Infatuated with young dancing boys, he was quoted by the fifteenth century poet Mawlana Abdurrahman Jami as saying that he “rent the shirts of the ‘unbearded’ when he got excited, and danced breast to breast with them” (translated by and cited in Schimmel 1975:181). It is possible, however, that this discourse on mysticism and mystical love may have developed in part to legitimate homoerotic practices that would otherwise be deemed *haram* (forbidden).

Jim Wafer proposes the existence of two types of Islamic mystical literature: a “vision complex” which may be understood as “the relationship between lover and beloved...[and is] mediated symbolically by the faculty of sight,” and a “passion complex” which “entails a symbolic physical interaction in which the lover is wounded or killed by his beloved” (1997:107-108). For the purpose of this chapter, the vision complex will be discussed as it serves to clarify and

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88 Ruzbihan Baqli (died 1209) was one of the great Persian love mystics and was mainly influenced by the Sufi Hussain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (857-922) (see Schimmel 1975:296-297).

89 In Abu Said’s *Halat u sukhunan-i shaykh Abu Said ibn Abil-Khayr*. See also footnote 71.

90 A famous example of the “passion complex” is the relationship of Mahmud Ghaznavi, the tenth century King who introduced Islam into large parts of Afghanistan and India, and his relationship with his Turkish slave Ayaz. Through his love for Ayaz, Mahmud Ghaznavi himself became enslaved. This image is used metaphorically by many Sufi writers (see Lindholm 1996:252).
complement the religious concept of the admiration of young males. The characteristic of the vision complex is the action of *nazar ila l-murd* which may be understood as "the contemplation of youth" (Trimingham 1998 (1971):193) or the "looking with admiration at a beloved person" (Wafer 1997:108). *Nazar* has religious significance for Islamic mystics, being seen as the equivalent to "the vision of God Himself" (Wafer 1997:108). In fact, it may have led to the formation of a cult of 'beautiful, beardless boys'. Although the aesthetic practices of the Sufis did not seem to be focused on the satisfaction of sensuality, Schimmel postulates that an essential feature of *sama* was "the presence of a *shahid*...[whose] very contemplation...might induce the Sufi involuntarily to dance" (Schimmel 1995:416). A *shahid* thus symbolised the beautiful beloved, for he is the true witness of divine beauty. To look at him, to adore him from a distance, may induce the Sufi to truly religious ecstasy, and to contemplate his face in worship. Wherever beauty is revealed, there out of necessity love must grow (Schimmel 1975:291).

The experience of male homoerotic and mystical love in Islamic societies through the practice of *shahid* has no equivalent in Western languages and especially not in the Eurocentric construct of homosexuality (see Rzehak 1997:55). Significantly, Islam's normative texts are relatively silent or ambiguous on this matter. The Quran clearly condemns homosexual practices, but not necessarily "homoerotic sentiment" (Schmidtke 1999:260). When discussing the legality of *sama*, medieval Islamic jurists were mainly concerned with whether "the content expresses physical love, sensual desire or vain frivolities" (Shiloah 1995:41). If the practice of *sama* was seen as "pure diversion", it demanded prohibition (Shiloah 1995:41). Orthodox jurists, therefore, were able to discredit non-religious dance by tactically categorising the aesthetic performance as non-religious, in contrast to the Sufi dances which as elements of the sacred practice of *sama*, could therefore be condoned. However, ultra-orthodox jurists, like Ibn Taymiyya, drew the line at effeminate and gender-crossing performers (Shehadi 1995:101).

The practice of mystical love as expressed through a *shahid* is in fact common to many cultures and is known throughout the Islamic world (see Baldauf 1988:5; Rzehak 1997:38). In Central Asia, the practice of *shahid* seems to have

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92 The Sufi poets Ahmad al-Ghazālī and Awhaduddin Kirmani were believed to have engaged in the practice of *shahid* contemplation (see Wafer 1997:113).
become institutionalised in the performances of *bache bazi*. According to the Islamicist Ingeborg Baldauf, as early as the ninth and tenth centuries (1988:5), Afghanistan had a reputation not only as a territory of beautiful boys but also of *bache bazi* performances. The origin of these dances is uncertain, but the specific characteristics of these performances provide insight into the male dances of Islamic cultures in general, and, more importantly, highlight their historical continuity and the influences underpinning contemporary dances in many Central Asian regions, including Afghanistan. During her research in the mid to late 1970s in north-western Afghanistan, Baldauf found that the performances of *bache bazi* were socially accepted phenomena (1988:5). She further argues that *bache bazi* may actually be an autochthonous term (Baldauf 1988:5). The etymology of the Persian term *bache bazi*, as with the polysemous term *bazi*, directs attention to dance as a game or playful activity, but also links it to sex and the sacred (see also Shalinsky 1994:77).

It is possible, however, that the term *bache bazi* may mean different things in different locations in Afghanistan, ranging from homosexuality to the performance of dance for a mentor or master. In its broadest sense, the word *bache* implies the generic term ‘boy’ (Baily 1988:140-141). In a narrower sense, however, *bache* refers to a good-looking adolescent male who has not yet grown a beard, “a *bacheh magbul, or bacheh birish*” (Baily 1988:141). *Bazi*, ‘play’, is derived from the word *bazi kardan* (playing), but may be understood as an amateur interest, a “shaug, a spectacle, something to follow, to discuss, to compare performers and performances” (Baily 1988:141), a hobby like the keeping of pigeons, or even the playing of musical instruments. In the context of a *bache bazi* refers to the “playing boy” (Baily 1988:141):

> [t]he term *bache bazi* referred to the total activity of dancing boy performance...where a group of men joined together for the purpose of staging and enjoying a performance of dancing, and to the dancing itself (Baily 1988:141).

A *bache baz*, therefore, is a term that usually refers to a male adult whose ‘hobby’ it is to keep the company of boys, or in other words a “dancing boy enthusiast, who enjoyed spectating the dance of the dancing boy” (Baily

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94 *Bache bazi* is translated in the Dari-English Dictionary as pederasty, loving the boys, and child’s play (Neghat and Burhan 1993:101). As individual words, *bazi* is translated as play, playing; game, sport; dance; deceit; practising and engaging, and *bache* as boy, son, catamite, “a boy kept by a pederast” (Neghat and Burhan 1993:96).

95 The Arabic/Persian *bache birish* term literally means a ‘boy with no beard’, but in a derogatory sense refers in Afghanistan to a catamite, that is “a boy kept by a pederast” (Neghat and Burhan 1993:137).
1988:141). Chittick (1983:289) connects the meaning of ‘bache baz’ with ‘shahid-baz’, that is someone “who is ‘devoted to witnesses’, ... who occupies himself with the contemplation of beauty in human form”. Indeed, a bache baz may be understood as a ‘mystical lover of boys’ in a Sufi sense, and thus is sometimes referred to as a dewana (dervish) (Baldauf 1988:75). The meanings of the term bache bazi, therefore, may range from sex to the sacred.⁹⁶

**The Influence of Wahhabi and Deobandi Madrassas upon Cultural Performances: Early 1930s to Late 1980s**

Whereas a relatively vibrant debate about the role of performance existed among medieval writers from the ninth to thirteenth centuries, a virtual dearth of written records appears thereafter. This paucity of materials is also evident in Afghanistan where the little available information about the history and role of religious and non-religious performances makes providing a comprehensive overview a difficult task. For the most part, however, attitudes towards performance in Afghanistan have largely reflected the ideologies of the various political regimes. But, at the same time, since the formation of Afghanistan as a nation in the mid-eighteenth century, religious establishments have exercised great influence both in the political sphere and in the regulation of social norms and values. Indeed, periodically, religious leaders have used their political authority to encourage “the population to resistance against temporal rulers”, as precipitated the fall of the reformist King Amanullah (1919-1929) (Olesen 1995:193).⁹⁷

Under the possible influence of concurrent, successful, secular reformist developments in Turkey under Kemal Ataturk and in Iran under Reza Shah Pahlavi, Amanullah similarly envisaged the formation of a modern nation-state

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⁹⁶ It is also interesting to note that the Jat, a small group of socially marginalised and “traditionally itinerant, endogamous, non-pastoral communities” living in Afghanistan are thought to have been engaged in the provision of services as dancing girls and prostitutes (see Doubleday 1988; Rao 1986:255, 260-264). If a woman or girl were to dance to music at a wedding or during a function in which only females were present, this aesthetic entertainment would be considered socially acceptable. Depending on the type of gathering, if women or girls performed in an exclusively male domain, their actions may be perceived as haram and therefore be linked to prostitution. In comparison, it is unthinkable to have a boy or man perform in the women’s domain. Since the rise of orthodox Islam in Afghanistan, especially since 1992, these itinerant groups of female entertainers had assumed a low profile and were not mentioned at the time of my research in Badakhshan (Rao 1986:255).
⁹⁷ See Chapter Four as well as Olesen (1995:144-165).
(see Ewans 2001:93-95). He began to introduce secular educational institutions and government-controlled madrasas with the intention of producing modern-educated government employees who were also trained in Islamic jurisprudence. The proclamation of the first constitution in 1923 “signalled Afghanistan’s entry into the political thought of the twentieth century” (Olesen 1995:120). Nevertheless, in order to maintain the crucial support of the ulema who continued to be highly influential for the majority of the population and who perceived Amanullah’s vision of a modern state to be anti-Islamic, Amanullah was forced to make considerable concessions. As a consequence, Islam and the nation as sources of legitimacy were...not integrated within the Constitution and instead the model of the legitimate transmission of power became dualistic (i.e. there were two separate sources of legitimacy) (Olesen 1995:122).

Moreover, Hanafi jurisprudence was included in the amendments to the Constitution that were passed at a Loya Jirga in 1924. This not only antagonised the sizeable Shiite community, but limited Amanullah’s plans of modernisation through his proposed law reforms. His vision of introducing “statutory law of dominantly secular nature” (Kamali 1985:20) under the pretext of “liberal interpretations of Islam” (Olesen 1995:130) aimed to grant the state responsibility for the determination and execution of punishment.

As already outlined in Chapter Four, Amanullah’s modernist ideals eventually backfired, leading to his downfall in 1929. The 1931 Constitution under King Mohammad Nadir Khan abandoned many of Amanullah’s statutory enactments that may have been perceived to foster the liberalisation of Islam (Kamali 1985:20). Instead, Nadir Khan emphasised the “adherence to Islam in legislation and government affairs” (Kamali 1985:20). Thus, conservative Islam under the influence of the qazi (a Sharia-applying judge) continued until the 1964 Constitution (Kamali 1985:20-21). This meant that all legal processes in Afghanistan were governed by Sharia law of the Hanafi school, with the traditional ulema and their rural support exclusively fulfilling the legal duties of administrators (see Olesen 1995 289:140, 127; Rashid 2000 435:83). With respect to the sanctioning of cultural practices, “beyond the parochial, tribal and localized identities, religious leaders were the autonomous keyholders to the socialization” of all Afghan communities (italics are this author’s emphasis, Olesen 1995:36). The 1964 Constitution under King Zahir Shah was thus marked by its conciliatory aims “to preserve the basic tenets of Islam while also responding to the need for social change and democratic reform” (Kamali 1985:21). It is important to note that in addition to Hanafi-based Sharia law, supplementary statutory laws that were modelled on Western jurisprudence and which dealt with criminal and civil cases for example were also introduced.
These secular laws, however, were believed to be “compatible with Islamic Law” (Olesen 1995:189). In reality, rural areas would have been more likely to follow Sharia, while urban areas were more likely to have been influenced by a combination of Western penal code and Islamic law. In retrospect, the 1923 Constitution under Amanullah may be considered to have been Afghanistan’s most liberal and tolerant constitution (Kamali 1985:28), but was short-lived as it was amended by the Loya Jirga the following year. Consequently, the 1964 Constitution under King Zahir Shah is held to be the most progressive constitution and as such, has served as the basis for both the Interim Administration (December 2001-June 2002) and the current Transitional Authority under Hamid Karzai.

Prior to the educational reforms introduced during the Musahiban period, the ulema, who were trained within a system of traditional and often-orthodox madrassas mostly based on Hanafi Islam but also influenced by Deobandism, thus served a relatively powerful function within the Afghan government. However, until the establishment of government-controlled madrassas in the 1930s and 1940s, the limited number of private madrassas in Afghanistan meant that many students aspiring to become an alim (religious scholar) were forced to seek education abroad.98 From the nineteenth century, therefore, Afghanistan’s religious students were exposed to the ideological influences of the conservative madrassas north of the Amu Darya in Central Asia, while others, indeed the majority of the ulema, were educated in the madrassas of the reformist ideology of the Deobandi in British India (Olesen 1995:186-187).99 From 1869-1979, many of these Afghan ulema had graduated from one particular reformist madrassa in India: Dar ul-Ulum in Deoband (Olesen 1995:198n22; Rizvi 1980:340; Roy 1986:57).100 The main exception to this

98 The Arabic term alim is the singular form of ulema and denotes a student who is aiming to become a Doctor of Law, that is a member of the religious elite.
99 Pre-1917, students from Afghanistan’s northern regions would usually enrol in madrassas in Bokhara (Roy 1986:45), but also those of Samarkand and Tashkent (all in present Uzbekistan). In India, the madrassas of Deoband, Bareilly, Gopal, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Swat were attended by many Afghans (see Olesen 1995:43).
100 Deoband is near Delhi and its madrassa, Dar ul-Ulum, was established in 1867 (Metcalf 1982:38), aiming to reorient “the Muslim community to its original cultural and religious identity in view of the decline of the Mughal empire and the onslaught of British colonization” (Olesen 1995:45). The followers of the Deobandi madrassas initiated a Sunni sectarian religio-political movement that was based on Islamic reformist ideology (see Zaman 1999a:61; Zaman 1999b:303). Post-partition, religious students from Afghanistan attended Deobandi-affiliated madrassas in Pakistan, of which many were located between Peshawar and Islamabad. The curriculum of Afghanistan’s most prominent state-controlled religious institution, the Dar al-Ulum-e Arabia madrassa which later became known as the Abu Hanifa madrassa in Kabul,
ideological domination arose when Amanullah, attempting to restrict the influence of this school, had banned Deobandi-trained ulema in favour of graduates from India’s more modernist Anglo-Mohammadan Oriental College (Olesen 1995:44, 144, 188). 101

To a lesser degree, some members of the ulema were also exposed to reformist madrassas that were close to and influenced by Arabian Wahhabism such as the Ahl-e Hadith (literally, ‘The People of the Path’) (Metcalf 1982:305; Roy 1995:81). 102 A number of Ahl-e Hadith madrassas that were associated with the Panjpir movement have been especially influential in Badakhshan, Kunar and Nuristan since the 1950s (see Roy 1986:212; Roy 1995:82). 103 During the jihad against the Soviet-backed government which attracted many Arab Wahhabis as volunteer mujahideen but also as recruits to Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda terrorist network, substantial funds from Saudi Wahhabis reached affiliated madrassas in Afghanistan, such as those connected with Ahl-e Hadith, and which led to the substantial dissemination of Wahhabism in both Pakistan and Afghanistan (see Roy 1995:81). It is the Deobandi and Wahhabi madrassas that I will now turn.

In spite of Amanullah’s unsuccessful introduction of secular law, his establishment of three secular secondary schools in Kabul (Klimburg 1966:191) encouraged his successors to continue his vision of modernisation. The Musahiban rulers not only further expanded the secular school system but also introduced government-controlled madrassas, especially during the 1930s

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101 This religious institution is located in Aligarh and was founded in 1877. (Olesen 1995:44).
102 Reacting against perceived laxity in Islamic practices, the political reform movement of Wahhabism was founded in the eighteenth century by Mohammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1787) in Saudi Arabia with the intention of creating a form of ‘unpolluted Islam’. It is important to note that the eighteenth/nineteenth century Indian reformist movements consisted of two streams, both of which have been confusingly termed ‘Wahhabi’ by the British as well as traditional Hanafi religious leaders (see Roy 1986:55; Roy 1995:20, 32-33, 82). The first group of Indian sectarian reformist ideology approved of Sufism and adhered to the formulations of groups that were associated with the teachings of Shah Waliullah (died 1762) and Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly as well as Deobandi ideology (Olesen 1995:108; Zaman 1999b:303). Their leaders were often Sufis, something that strictly set them apart from Arabian Wahhabis. The second sectarian group, the Ahl-e Hadith, while originally being influenced by Shah Waliullah, adhered to scriptural Islam. This group rejected the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence and was adamantly anti-Sufi and anti-Shiite.
103 Panjpir is in contemporary NWFP of Pakistan.
and 1940s (Olesen 1995:186-187). Not surprisingly, these state-controlled religious institutions represented a challenge to the more traditional private madrassas, which until then had served as the only domestic religious institutions. In the early 1950s, the Faculty of Sharia at Kabul University was established as a central, state-controlled religious teaching institution (Olesen 1995:188), eventually producing a core of modern intellectuals such as Burhanuddin Rabbani and Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf, who were well-versed in Islam.

The Islamic reformist ideologies taught at Deobandi- and Wahhabi-influenced madrassas in the Subcontinent promoted a theory of liberation “through a return by the whole society to its former faith” (Roy 1986:56). They called for a renewed emphasis on the implementation of Sharia and promulgated strict adherence to the normative texts, attributing central importance to the study of hadith. Deobandism is particularly influenced by the Dars-e nizami (‘Course on Religious Education’), and has emulated the ideas of medieval Islamic scholars that stressed adherence to “traditionally transmitted’ sciences – such as [among others] morphology and syntax, Quranic studies, Hadith,...law,...principles of jurisprudence...[and] theology” (Zaman 1999b:297). Yet it is important to note that members of Deobandi madrassas have not only been exponents of orthodox Islam but have also been strongly linked to Sufism, in particular Naqshbandiya and Qadiriya (Olesen 1995:50). The orthoprax Sufi orders observe the Hanafi school of jurisprudence but strictly denounce non-Islamic aesthetic practices (see Roy 1986:55, 212). With their vision of the establishment of a “truly Islamic state” (Zaman 1999a:81), based on their understanding of the circumstances of the Prophet Mohammad during the seventh century, many teachers and students from these madrassas became strongly opposed to non-Sunni minorities, Islamic modernists and any non-Islamic practices. The “urban, madrasa-based, religious elite” of the

104 These government madrassas taught some modern sciences such as mathematics, physics and geography. Education was based on a Western model of teaching, such as class teaching, class plans and timetables, and followed a standardised curriculum (see Olesen 1995:187-188).
105 The Faculty of Sharia was opened in 1952 and financially assisted by the Al Azhar University in Cairo (Olesen 1995:188). This department in particular, through its close ties with Al Azhar University in Cairo and its offer of a curriculum that was almost entirely based on Sharia law, led to a “shift in spiritual inspiration from the Subcontinent to the Arab world” (Olesen 1995:189).
106 The Dars-e nizami is a collection of variedly interpreted writings largely attributed to the eighteenth century Mulla Nizam al-Din Muhammad (died 1748). These writings are commonly taught in madrassas throughout South Asia and include texts from the ninth to the eighteenth centuries from Iranian, Central Asian and Indian scholars (see Zaman 1999b:303-304).
Deobandi, for example, specifically aspired to disengage Muslims from local traditions such as "inherited, customary beliefs and rituals" (Zaman 1999b:304).

Wahhabism, like Deobandism, promotes the literal interpretation of the authoritative texts. But even more than the Deobandi ideology, Wahhabism strictly prohibits Sufi praxis especially the veneration of saints, poetry and the aesthetic practices of music and dance (see Marsden 1998:71). Relatedly, it is strongly opposed to traditional local culture and instead advocates Arabian cultural values derived from Wahhabi ideology. Mohammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1787), the founder of the movement, was inspired by the ninth century Islamic jurists Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya (see Roy 1986:212; Zaman 1999a:63), and advocated the use of *ijtihad* (personal interpretation) as well as the declaration of a *jihad* (armed struggle) against those Muslims who did not concord with his puritanical views. Already aware of the pervasiveness of these extreme interpretations at the end of the nineteenth century, the Afghan *Amir* Abdur Rahman Khan had tried to stem the rise of Wahhabism in Afghanistan by circulating anti-Wahhabi pamphlets (Olesen 1995:80-81). Nevertheless, Wahhabism slowly spread and in Badakhshan, a number of Sunni Badakhshi *mawlawi* (local clergy) in Zardew as well as around Argu have been exposed to Wahhabism since the 1950s.

As can be seen from the institutions which Afghan religious students attended, the *ulema* – when educated in Afghanistan – were either trained in traditional private Hanafi *madrassas* (especially prior to Amanullah's rule) or in often Deobandi-influenced state-controlled *madrassas* (after 1930). If they had studied abroad, then it was usually at Dar ul-Ulum in Deoband or affiliated *madrassas* initially in India and, after 1947, in Pakistan, or at the modernist Anglo-Mohammadan Oriental College at Aligarh in India. A smaller, but nevertheless significant portion of religious students attended *madrassas* in

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107 See also the discussion about Ibn Taymiyya earlier in this chapter.

108 Abdul Wahhab was patronised by the Saudi ruler Mohammad bin Saud (died 1765) and was also related to the royal family through the marriage of his daughter to Abdul Aziz, Mohammad bin Saud's oldest son (see Champion 2001:35). In the early 1920s, Abdul Aziz used this ideology to serve his own political interests in a bid to reform the nomadic tribes of central Arabia into a unified *umma* (Muslim community) (see Marsden 1998:71-72). Abdul Aziz conquered Mecca in 1924, but required British help to consolidate his position. In 1932, Abdul Aziz proclaimed himself King of Saudi-Arabia and established the Saud dynasty (see Marsden 1998:73).

109 This form of Wahhabism, however, mostly emanated from what was referred to as Indian Wahhabism.
Afghanistan and Pakistan that were close to Wahhabi ideologies (especially Ahl-e Hadith from the 1950s). Hence, the legality of all cultural practices in Afghanistan has always been subject to the judgments of ulema who had trained in mostly conservative religious institutions.

From the time of Amanullah's modernising reforms, and later, when they were continued by the ruling Musahiban family, there was evidence of increasing friction between students who were secularly-educated and those from traditional madrassas. By the 1950s, the ulema were being intellectually challenged by Islamists, who contested their exclusive right as an intermediary authority, which had been granted to them since the inclusion of Hanafi jurisprudence in 1924. In contrast to the ulema who advocated maintaining "the legal structure of society rather than installing the 'just society'", the Islamists – while remaining "traditional in their formulations" (Olesen 1995:239) – have been concerned with a modern society that necessitated a new interpretation of the Qur'an and a critical review of hadith (Olesen 1995:237). The Islamists thus proposed a renewed emphasis on ijtihad (individual inquiry to establish the ruling of Islamic law). As was discussed in Chapter Four, during the jihad against the Soviet-backed government, ideological differences between Islamists and the ulema were temporarily put aside in the interests of political unity.

Afghanistan's modern era can be thought of as beginning with Amanullah's reformist period in the 1920s, then continuing primarily from the mid-1960s initially under King Zahir Shah and after his displacement in 1973, under President Mohammad Daoud, and extending to the Communist regimes. It ceased with the inauguration of an Islamic state in 1992. This modern period was marked by the emergence of an awareness of Afghanistan's cultural heritage and in spite of the historical controversial status of performance in Islam, it seems that traditional sport, dance and music events occurred to varying degrees in public, semi-public and private settings during this time (until 1992), without too many restrictions. Celebrations and outdoor festivals such as jeshen (Afghanistan's Independence Day), nowruz (Persian New Year) and id (major Islamic festival) were positive forms of relaxation and entertainment. In addition, performances also arose in the private domain, especially during the life-cycle events of weddings or after the birth of a child.

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Further, at the royal and presidential court as well as among the elite, aesthetic entertainment was provided by *kesbi* (hereditary) performers.

Trends in modernisation were reflected in government publications that utilised modern print technology. From 1947 to the 1980s, a quarterly journal *Afghanistan* was published in Dari, English and French by the Afghan Historical Society and featured articles on Afghanistan’s cultural heritage (see Dupree 1977:225). In the late 1960s/early 1970s, the pro-Western journal *Lamar* published articles on Afghan culture in Dari and Pushto (Mills and Ahrary n.d.). From 1973, this journal was superseded by *Folklore*, a bimonthly publication in Dari and English by the newly established Folklore Department of the Ministry of Education. This publication covered a range of topics including Sufism, wedding ceremonies, folk music, poetry, games, food, and natural remedies and even articles on non-religious customs (see also Dupree 1977:232). Authors contributed in Dari, Pushto and English. This publication, with a couple of name changes, continued to be produced during the Communist period until the late 1980s.111

In the 1960s, with improved radio transmission and a gradual increase in the availability of transistor radios throughout the country, large sectors of society became exposed to public music programs consisting of traditional Afghan and classical music genres (see also Baily 1994; Slobin 1974).112 These music programs were influenced by court musicians trained in the Hindustani classical music genre,113 Western-trained military band musicians, as well as the input of foreign advisers (Turkish, Soviet, American, British, German) (see Slobin 1974:244). In 1965, during Afghanistan’s constitutional monarchy, a Ministry of Culture and Information was established to which an Arts and Culture department was later attached. In 1973, Prime Minister Moosa Shafiq created the four new departments of Fine Arts, Theatre, Literature and Folklore, and Music, which thus reflected the growing interest in Afghan cultural heritage (see Dupree 1973:691; Dupree 1977:203). It is even possible that during this modern period, both genders may have danced together at

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111 This publication was renamed *Farhang-e Khalq* (‘Culture of the Masses’) under the Presidency of Hafizullah Amin. Its name was changed once again to *Farhang-e Mardom* (‘People’s Culture’) under the Presidency of Babrak Karmal from the early-to-late 1980s.

112 Afghanistan was first exposed to limited radio in 1925 under Amanullah (see Grevemeyer 1987:320) and regular broadcasts in Kabul went to air from 1941 onwards (see Dupree 1976:7; Slobin 1974:244-248). From the 1960s, music programs which were receivable on transistor radio constituted the main form of mass entertainment.

113 See footnote 55 for history of court musicians.
private events such as weddings or at other special occasions in urban, secularly-educated circles. Occasionally, public drama, music and dance programs were performed in the theatres of Kabul, and to a lesser degree in the cities of Herat and Mazar-e Sharif. These more liberal attitudes to performance reflected the fact that a growing number of clergy had been educated at government-controlled madrassas such as Dar al-Ulum-e Arabia in Kabul which included some modern subjects in their curricula. In the lead up to the elections of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) in September 1969, traditional forms of music and dance were publicly performed during the election campaigns of some candidates. It seems therefore that aesthetic performances were used in this political context to drum up support for individual candidates (Dupree 1971). The staging of the First International Rock Festival in Kabul in 1975 was perhaps the strongest indication of the modern direction of Afghanistan's secularly-educated, urban youth (see Dupree 1976:1). Music and dance performances were also held in urban theatres, but the public broadcast of dance performances in which men and women were seen dancing side by side remained a radical and provocative event.

Initially, attitudes towards performance during the Communist regime from 1978-1992 did not differ immensely from the periods of rule of King Zahir Shah and President Mohammad Daoud. Sport and aesthetic entertainment were patronised with the aim of establishing a 'national cultural heritage'. During Nur Mohammad Taraki's Khalq-dominated regime in 1978/1979 (see Chapter Four), national television was introduced, although it was largely limited to Kabul (Grevemeyer 1987:320-321). From that time, the state-owned radio and television networks broadcast mainly traditional folk music and dances from various Afghan provinces. It was also during this era that the musician Bazgul Badakhshi came to prominence.

114 Personal communication with expatriate Afghan, former member of elite, Australia, 2000.
115 Following the 1964 Constitution, a shura, a bicameral parliament consisting of a fully elected Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) and a partly elected Meshrano Jirga (Upper House) was established (Dupree 1973:587).
116 Dupree (1971:3, 12) includes in his report two pictures of atan performers in Parwan and Ghazni provinces.
117 During Faizabad's Communist period, a volleyball tournament was organised by the provincial government of Badakhshan on the third day of the celebration. Public or private aesthetic performances, however, were rare during the id-ee qurban celebrations of the Communist period in Badakhshan. (Personal communication with expatriate Badakhsi, 2001).
118 Television sets were unaffordable for most of Afghanistan's population, especially in the rural areas.
119 Personal communication with expatriate Afghans in Australia, 1999. Raja Anwar argues that the subsequent government of Karmal Babrak and its elite members were less inclined to
Nevertheless, during this era, a shift was evident in the understanding of cultural heritage and its bearers who became valued contributors to the egalitarian Communist society. This represented a break from previous regimes when performers, particularly hereditary entertainers, were marginalised in Afghan society. In line with Soviet ideology, the Afghan Communist regime utilised recreational and aesthetic entertainment as a means of developing a single national identity and preferably a Communist identity, rather than multi-ethnic and religious identities. This development of new political identities seemed to be aimed at undermining existing cultural relationships and the authority of traditional political stakeholders such as the ulema, members of the royal family, government administrators who were often close to the ruling families, as well as Sufi organisations (see Levin 1996). Indeed, the establishment of Sovietised entertainment styles in Afghanistan seems to have been clearly intended to supplant local traditions and their implicit associations with Islam. Moreover, the creation of music or dance ensembles, for example, was encouraged as a hybridisation of performing styles with a general emphasis on the construction of a syncretic ethnicity for the sake of Communist ideals. The emphasis of this era was clearly on non-religious entertainment and the suppression of Islamic values, although Islamic practices were not altogether outlawed and for the most part, religious duties remained

favour traditional types of aesthetic entertainment such as folk music and, instead, seemed to prefer Hindustani-influenced classical music that was performed by professional urban musicians (see Anwar 1989:49).

Following my inquiries about popular Badakhshi musicians, Bazgul Badakhshi was nominated almost unanimously as the best known musician, both within Afghanistan and among expatriate Afghans. He was known particularly for his style of singing and storytelling in which he impersonates the voices of women. Bazgul used to perform on Radio Afghanistan in Kabul during the period of King Zahir Shah and Mohammad Daoud in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. He maintained his status as a folk musician during the Communist regimes until the early 1990s. With his appearance on television, Bazgul became a national figure and developed the image of a Badakhshi cultural icon, a 'voice of Badakhshan'. With increasing age, he ceased performing on his trademark instrument, the ghichak, instead performing predominantly as a folk comedian. Many of the Badakhshis I interviewed during my research were of the opinion that he had died, whereas others reported that he had been seen begging during the nowruz bokashi tournament in Faizabad in 1998 (see Chapter Six). In May 1998, I attempted to visit Bazgul in his hometown, but was unable to complete my journey due to fighting between local commanders one of whom had apparently taken Bazgul hostage. While this account of his use as a hostage could not be confirmed, it was more than likely that if he were still alive, Bazgul would have been in a severely impoverished state.

This reflected the attempted implementation of a 'nationalities' solution which was directly derived from the Soviet approach in the former Soviet Central Asian republics in the 1920s (see Micheline Centlivres-Demont in Bourdieu et al. 1981:41; Korgun 1993:105, 112-113).

Policies on sport and aesthetic practices were relatively successfully implemented in Soviet Central Asia which saw the rise of state-sponsored sport teams as well as professional music and dance ensembles.
relatively unaffected. It seems however, that the Communist regime mostly targeted the religious practices of Sufi orders, perhaps because these groups may have been perceived to be potential political threats. Evidence for this discouragement of mystical practices may be found in an undated publication from the Ministry of Islamic Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan which states as its aim “[t]o prevent superstitions and customs which disturb the civilities and orders of social and economic life of the country” (Olesen 1995:259). Mystical practices of any form therefore were not to be encouraged. 123

**Performance during the Mujahideen, Rabbani and Taliban Eras**

With the escalation of civil war and the encroachment of *mujahideen* forces on Kabul, it seems unlikely that public recreational and aesthetic performances would have been performed, especially during the interregnum of President Najibullah (1989-1992). In addition, the conservative attitudes of some influential members of the *mujahideen* parties, including the Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami, Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami, Khalis’ Hezb-e Islami, Sayyaf’s Ittehad-e Islami, and even the Jamiat-e Islami, meant that they did not look kindly at non-Islamic practices. A number of these conservative Islamists had been either formally trained at Deobandi and Wahhabi *madrassas* in Pakistan, or at least, been exposed to their ideologies. 124 Their prevailing negativity towards non-Islamic cultural expression is well exemplified in the (undated) manifesto *De Afghanistan de Islami Hezb maram* (‘Objectives of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan’) of Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami, which prior to the collapse of Communist regime, stated that:

> The Qur’an and the *hadith* shall be the primary sources of law, and the Hanafi jurisprudence will be followed in matters of interpretation and *ijtihād*. To materialise this, a new organisation will be established with the expressed purpose of harmonising all the laws and regulations with the principles of Islam (Art. 1, 2)...Legislation concerning social reforms shall aim at the prevention of adultery (*zinā*), wine drinking, gambling and moral depravity. Films, books and publications which corrupt social mores will be banned (Art. 6, 8). The “Shari‘a veil” shall be


124 Younis Khalis (Khalis’ Hezb-e Islami) and Mohammad Nabi Mohammedi (Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami), for example were trained at the Deobandi Haqania in Pakistan’s NWFP. The Wahhabi influences of Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf (Ittehad-e Islami) have been described in earlier sections of this chapter as well as in Chapter Four.
restored for women; the present system of coeducation will be abandoned; and men and women shall no longer work together in the same place (Art. 7, 31, 80) ...(cited in Kamali 1985:246).

Some aspects of this manifesto are certainly reminiscent of the Taliban’s edicts post-1996, which will be discussed in a later section. However, while a number of mujahideen interpreted aesthetic performances as haram, and thus offensive to Islamic morality, not all Islamists prohibited non-religious performances. During the jihad against the Communist regime, music, for example, was either banned or limited to patriotic jihadi music in areas that were controlled by the mujahideen (see Gardish 2002). In fact, the Jamiat-e Islami produced audio tapes with mujahideen ‘fighting’ songs that promoted Islamic ideals and denounced the Communists. These religio-political lyrics were accompanied by traditional music and performed on traditional instruments. In 1999 in Badakhshan, I also viewed an unpublished video which documented the success of the mujahideen and included in its coverage music performances as well as an atan-e meli that were performed in a mujahideen base in the mountains.

Following the collapse of the Communist regime in 1992, neither the conservative ulema, nor the Islamists encouraged participation in non-Islamic practices such as music or dance performances. Yet, while all of the mujahideen parties that had successfully defeated the Soviet troops pleaded for adherence to Islamic guidelines, no agreement on “what Islam means in everyday life” could be formulated (Roy 1998:200-201). With the exception of Abdul Rashid Dostum, the secular and openly modern Uzbek leader of the Junbesh-e Melli, all Sunni and Shiite political parties were generally conservative. In 1991, the Jamiat-e Islami Afghanistan publicly announced that they would patronise Persian culture, although this largely referred to religiously-oriented heritage such as poetry (see Rubin 1995:220). In fact, during this transition phase, entertainment remained implicitly associated with the Communist regime which was alleged to have fostered un-Islamic behaviour. As a consequence, conservative mujahideen targeted performers who had publicly expressed Communist ideals or performed for Communist

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125 I would like to thank William Maley for mentioning this source and allowing me to listen to his personal copy.

126 See Chapter Six for further comments on the atan. The video was shown in the home of a local Tajik commander who was aligned with Massoud’s shura-e nazar. It consisted of many roughly edited clips that were filmed during the jihad from a variety of different sources. The exact date of its production is unclear (1980-1992).
governments. The assassination by mujihadeen of the Badakhshi musician Faiz-e Mangal from Jurm, who had been a well-known performer throughout Afghanistan, is such an example. This fraught political environment, together with the diversity of religious interpretations and emphases, led to considerable uncertainty about the role and legality of the expression of local cultural practices within the new Islamic state.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the new Islamist rulers of 1992 sought to found the Islamic State of Afghanistan on Shari'a law and aimed to remain close to the guidance of the normative texts. Recreational activities, such as wrestling and other sports, continued to accompany the religious celebrations during the early period of the Rabbani government. Yet aesthetic performances were much more controversial as seen in 1992, when Afghanistan's premier music venue, the Kabul Theatre was destroyed during the internecine bombing on Kabul by forces of mujahideen parties. As a result of this fighting, the Kabul Music School was also demolished and never rebuilt. Perhaps as a direct consequence, no government publications on culture were ever produced during the Presidency of Rabbani (1992-2001). Aesthetic performances were in theory permitted under Shari'a law; in reality, such events rarely took place. Since there were no official edicts against non-religious entertainment, cinemas continued to operate at the beginning of Rabbani's term (from 1992-1996) and screened entertainment films in Kabul (Roy 1998:207). In general, whilst not officially banned, music events were not commonly performed in public but rather were confined to the private homes of those families who did not follow the views of extremist Islamists such as Hekmatyar and Sayyaf. Outdoor music performances of all kinds were generally discouraged; indoor music programs continued to be performed periodically in the auditorium of Radio-Television Afghanistan (also known as Radio Kabul) but also in private houses during weddings. The radio and television station during the Rabbani Presidency (1992-1996) in Kabul also broadcast Afghan music programs.

Some official government functions included a music program, although usually once the religio-political leadership had left. The Rabbani

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127 I have not been able to ascertain the exact date of his murder, but it appears to have been either in the interregnum period of Najibullah (1989-1992), or during the early Rabbani Presidency (approximately 1992-1995).
129 For example, Massoud held a function for the US Assistant Secretary of State of South Asian Affairs, Robin Raphel in a guesthouse at Estalif in the Shomali valley, north of Kabul in
government in Kabul maintained a military orchestra which sporadically performed during *jeshen* celebrations and on rare occasions, for state guests. While government functions during the rule of Zahir Shah and Mohammad Daoud as well as the Communist regimes would often have included a music program, these were mostly discontinued during the Rabbani government as a result of its tense political alliances with extremist Islamic groups such as Sayyaf and Hekmatyar.\(^{130}\)

In contrast to the Communist government's liberal attitude, dancing was seen as lewd and subsequently dancing as well as the screening of films that included dances were banned. Dances with musical accompaniment were sometimes performed at modern wedding receptions, though they were once again segregated by gender. This marked disapproval of aesthetic practices was most evident during the first and last three months of Islamic governance,\(^{131}\) when even the traditional performance of private music and dancing at weddings became infrequent.

It is important to note that conservative allies of the Rabbani government such as the Sunni Tajik Ismail Khan, a Jamiat-e Islami commander who ruled over Herat and neighbouring provinces in western Afghanistan, imposed their own restrictions on performances. In Herat, for example, in 1994, music was heavily censored under Ismail Khan and the proposed content of music programs had to be given clearance by local authorities. Songs that lamented the mujahideen cause, however, were approved, whereas love songs and dance songs were banned (see Baily 2001). In contrast to Ismail Khan's censorship as well as the generally conservative attitude of other coalition members of the Rabbani government, only the secular leader of Junbesh-e Melli, the Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostam, had not imposed any bans on aesthetic practices in the territories that were under his control in north-western Afghanistan.\(^{132}\)

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April 1995. Once Massoud had left the function, the musical program began and in this instance, even included dancing (Personal communication with William Maley who received an account of the function from a close associate of Massoud, Canberra, October 1999).\(^{130}\) As outlined in Chapter Four however, Hekmatyar was only really part of an official alliance for three months before the fall of Kabul in 1996.\(^{131}\)

For further information on the negative attitudes on aesthetic performances during the Rabbani Presidency in Kabul, see comments that were made by a Rabbani spokesman as well as the former Head of Bakhtar (State Press Agency) that appeared in an article in the Pakistani newspaper *The Muslim* on 15 July 1996, and which are cited in Baily (2001:34).\(^{132}\)

At the end of August 1996, upon the invitation of Dostam who at that time was the governor of Balkh province, Jan van Belle (2001) was able to record a music performance that was sanctioned by the provincial government, in the library of the cultural centre of Mazar-e Sharif.
Towards the end of Rabbani’s leadership in Kabul, the advent of Hekmatyar as Prime Minister from late June until September 1996 led to a marked shift in the position of the Islamic State of Afghanistan towards non-Islamic practices. The *burqa* immediately became compulsory and aesthetic entertainment was virtually banned. The rapprochement of Hekmatyar with the Rabbani government indicates the degree to which the latter had to accommodate important allies, regardless of their radical tendencies, in order to ensure their continued support. Extremist Islamic doctrines which were mostly espoused by Hekmatyar meant also that all aesthetic practices that were not clearly condoned by Islam’s normative texts were entirely prohibited. In reality, any performances that could potentially be interpreted as ‘un-Islamic’ were banned or, at the very least, significantly limited in the territories of ultra-conservative commanders.

With the rise of the Taliban in 1994, many characteristics of orthodox Islamist and Islamic ideologies resurfaced (see Chapter Four). As a predominantly ethnic Pashtun phenomenon, the Taliban imperceptibly assimilated Sunni ultra-orthodox ideologies with local Pashtun traditions, melding *pashunwali*, the *ulema*, the system of rural madrassas, Deobandi and Wahhabi ideologies, as well as a strong rejection of Sufi practices (see Glatzer 1998:169; Rashid 2000:112; Roy 1998:204). Strongly influenced by distorted Deobandi interpretations (Rashid 2000:88), the Taliban gave these doctrines precedence over the traditional Hanafi doctrines taught at madrassas in Afghanistan. Rashid (2000:90) states in 1999 “at least eight Taliban cabinet ministers in Kabul were graduates of...Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania and dozens of other madrassas in Afghanistan and Pakistan.”

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133 This information was gathered from a variety of informants in Badakhshan who lived in Kabul during that time.
134 Written communication with Dr Najibullah Lafraie, March 2001.
135 Personal information with member of Badakhi elite, Faizabad, 1999.
137 It is important to recognise that many members of the Taliban who were trained in Pakistani madrassas would have known little about Afghan traditions.
138 It must be kept in mind that while Afghanistan’s *ulema* were influenced by Deobandi ideology, in reality vast differences in interpretations, ranging from moderate to perverted, existed between urban and rural madrassas and which were reflected in varying degrees of approval/disapproval of cultural performances. Many Taliban had attended Deobandi madrassas that were linked to the Jamiat-e Ulema-e Islam, a political party in Pakistan, for example the Dar ul-Ulum Haqqania (see Maley 2002:225-226), which taught a controversial interpretation of Deobandi.
more graduates served as Taliban governors in the provinces, military commanders, judges and bureaucrats. Music and dance performances were branded impermissible and un-Islamic in a manner which seems to echo the arguments of medieval Islamic writers, especially Ibn Taymiyya. Furthermore, the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law mirrored the ultra-strict Arabian Wahhabi doctrines, which had filtered into Afghanistan since at least the 1950s. This influence was most apparent in the extreme censorship of non-Islamic performances that was enforced in territories under their control.

Within hours of taking the capital Kabul at the end of September 1996, the Taliban introduced the strictest Islamic system of the contemporary world and immediately made public their views on aesthetic and entertainment practices. Among other things, music, dancing, television, and cinemas were immediately banned, as were all social institutions including libraries and entertainment venues (see Paik 1997). This censorship was enforced by special Taliban units under the ‘Religious Police’, which was virtually a replication of a similar organisation that has existed in Saudi Arabia since the mid-eighteenth century (see Kepel 2002:229-230, 405n23; Maley 1998:15): Amr bil-marof wa nahi an il-munkir (The Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice). In comparison, aesthetic Islamic practices such as the singing of the azan (the Muslim call to prayer) and the namaz (the obligatory prayer consisting of a prescribed routine of patterned physical actions) continued to be condoned by all Islamic groups.

Interviews recorded with senior Taliban officials in 1996 and 2000 provide some insight into the state of aesthetic performances in Afghanistan during the Taliban era and further substantiate the militia's extremist Islamic views. In an Associated Press interview in 1996, Taliban’s Education Minister at that time, Mullah Abdul Hanifi, claimed that music must be opposed "as it creates a strain in the mind and hampers the study of Islam" (AP 1996). In an interview in the 22 May 2000 edition of ‘Time' magazine, the former Taliban Justice Minister, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, stated:

We are Muslims and we are required to follow the Holy Koran and

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139 The Wahhabi disapproved of any deviation from their 'pure' interpretation of Islam and declared that "any Muslim who disagreed with the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam deserved severe punishment" (Marsden 1998:72).
140 Roy (1999:7:n1) notes, however, that the Taliban generally restrained themselves from one of the Wahhabs’ main concerns in opposing the veneration of shrines. It seems that the Taliban may have in some way recognised the Sufi influence in Deobandism as well as local traditions and, for that reason, mostly left Sufi shrines intact.
implement...Shariat. If we don’t follow it we are committing a sin...We are following the instructions of God. It is not me saying what should be done. We are told by God what to do...Our legal code is not something the Taliban has created...every vice has to be stopped and every virtue promulgated (Fathers 2000a).

When asked why it had been necessary to ban non-religious music and dancing, the Minister, in line with orthodox medieval Islamic jurists, replied that such performances “can lead you astray. It is wrong to think the people want them” (Fathers 2000a). The Taliban’s former Foreign Minister, Mullah Wakil Motawwakil, was also interviewed for the same ‘Time’ magazine edition. When asked about the Taliban’s apparent violations of concerns for human rights, Motawwakil responded:

We do not believe we have denied anyone their rights....If there are some restrictions it is because of our culture. People accept this. It is not a Taliban issue, but something which people have always followed (Fathers 2000b).

This latter statement confirms that Islamic extremists within Afghanistan believed that there was only one culture, namely an Islamic culture that was strictly based on the normative texts. In Taliban territories, largely as a result of the ubiquitous Religious Police who incarcerated anyone perceived to have contravened the Taliban’s strict edicts, there was little effective public opposition to the dogmatic prohibition of non-Islamic performances.

At the pinnacle of their regime, the Taliban controlled over eighty percent of Afghanistan. Concomitantly, it seems that some authorities in areas controlled by the United Front gradually adopted more conservative policies. This may be attributable to their anticipation of the Taliban’s inevitable occupation of Badakhshan wherein conservatism would have facilitated their assimilation with the incoming Taliban leadership. Alternatively, it may also represent the espousal of more conservative Islam by groups such as the Uzbeks associated with Hezb-e Islami and Pushtuns associated with Wahhabism, as a means of differentiating themselves from the official and more moderate position of the Tajik-dominated leadership of the Jamiat-e Islami dominated-Rabbani government. In 1998 and 1999 in Badakhshan, a general trend towards ultra-conservative Islam was noticeable among the local population and commanders alike. Indeed, with the politicisation of Islam during the jihad and later with the establishment of an Islamic State, non-religious performances had become rare events. This was especially the case in regions that were occupied by often-opposing factions such as in Faizabad, where many political parties and independent commanders kept offices. At the same time, however,
the weekly internet audio programs provided by the media outlet of the anti-Taliban alliance, Afghan Mujahideen Publications,\textsuperscript{141} introduced and ended news segments with traditional Afghan instrumental music. This organisation, largely under the influence of Massoud’s \textit{shura-e nazar}, did not officially oppose non-Islamic performances. While the Faizabad television station, which had been established in 1985 and which at the time of my field research was the only functioning station in Afghanistan, continued to broadcast mostly government and religious programs, it had ceased broadcasting public music or dance programs due to their sensitive nature.\textsuperscript{142} As will become evident in the following chapters, aesthetic entertainment occurred in either a private or public setting only if the local commander or community leader condoned it.

With the exception of the Communist period, Badakhshan has always been a relatively orthodox territory. Both religious and non-religious practices in the province have been exposed to a range of diverse influences including Hanafi Sunni, Nizari Sevenener Shiites Ismaili and Naqshbandi Sufi Islam, as well as Communism and modernism, in addition to local traditions. The incorporation of the emotional and spiritual elements of mystical Islam, initially through more liberal Ismaili doctrines, then later through the emergence of Sufism from the ninth and tenth centuries onwards, influenced the praxis of otherwise orthodox scriptural Islam. Hence, although it has generally remained a conservative society, the impact of mystical Islam is evident in sacred and everyday practices, such as in the religious and non-religious music of both Sunnis and Ismailis. With the politicisation of Islam, especially since the mid-1970s, Islam in Badakhshan, as in the rest of Afghanistan, has been consolidated as the central cultural influence on society. Yet while Badakhshi Islamist leaders are guided by Sharia law, the impact of Sufism remains considerable as exemplified in the popular practice of veneration at \textit{ziarats} and in the widespread appreciation of mystical poetry. Hence, varying perspectives of Islam are manifest in Badakhshan with the consequence that differing philosophies exist about what constitutes a ‘good’ Muslim.

Conservative attitudes towards artistic performances as manifested by both the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, were also

\textsuperscript{141} Massoud’s Shura-e Nazar initially produced a hardcopy and then later an electronic/internet political newsletter from the Panjshir in Kapisa Province under the name of \textit{Payam-e-Mujahid} (‘Message of the Mujahid’). The URL of the website for this ongoing publication by Afghan Mujahideen Publications is \url{http://www.payamemujahid.com/}.

\textsuperscript{142} Interview, director of Badakhshan’s TV station, June 1998.
reflected in the lack of inclusion of these practices on their websites. The internet homepage of “Shariat Online” (2001),\textsuperscript{143} a Pakistani-based Taliban mouthpiece, included a section entitled “Ariana Encyclopedia” which listed a number of Quranic Sura recitations as well as two taranas that were classified as folk songs.\textsuperscript{144} It is interesting to note that the term “folk song” was employed to categorise an event in a non-ritual context, even though it was a musically accompanied liturgical recitation. A tarana is considered to be a type of nationalistic song, but the term also applies to religious Islamic songs. Since the Taliban envisaged an Islamic society in which all aspects of government were entirely grounded in Sharia law, these taranas were inevitably based on Quranic texts and contained pro-Taliban messages (see Baily 2001:7). Importantly, within Taliban ideology, these recitations were not considered to be music, but rather as a form of religious practice.

Neither Islam’s primary authoritative religious text – the Quran – nor the hadith explicitly mention the (il)legality of aesthetic performances. No firm conclusions can thus be drawn from these normative texts as to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of aesthetic practices. In fact, the Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s (1997) states that

\[\text{the legality of music [and dance] in Islam still remains and will always remain ambiguous as divinely willed. This ambiguity serves a useful purpose in that it accepts varying modes and forms of music [and dance] without permitting that music [and dance] which separates the listener from religion and is an obstacle to the remembrance of God... There is no music [or dance] in the Islamic world which does not remind one of God. Even music to which people dance at weddings carries with it a reminiscence of the classical modes, which themselves are related to inner states combined with the yearning of the soul for God (1997:230).}\]

Nevertheless, either official or tacit bans on all non-Islamic performances were evident throughout Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999. This reflected the conservative influences of Islamists such as Rabbani (Naqshbandi doctrines), Hekmatyar (Ibn Taymiyya philosophies) and Sayyaf (Wahhabi ideology), as well as independent Wahhabi-associated groups who denounced aesthetic performances as ‘improper’ conduct for Muslims. In stark contrast, other influential figures particularly Ismaili religious and political community leaders

\textsuperscript{143} Immediately after the attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, most websites dealing with Afghanistan were defaced or closed by computer hackers or were forced to close as a result of hate mail. These sites may currently no longer be available for viewing.

\textsuperscript{144} Prior to September 11, 2001, two examples of Taliban taranas were available on the website “Shariat Online” (the page no longer exists), “Tarana 1” and “Tarana 2” (Shariat 2001); another example is listed on Freemuse’s website “Taliban Chant” (Baily 2001).
publicly valued the expression of local recreational and aesthetic practices as essential aspects of their cultural heritage.

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The extensive review of literature in this chapter indicates that although cloaked in ambiguity, non-Islamic practices have a significant historical place within Islamic culture. In Afghanistan, the political importance of aesthetic practices is exemplified by the traditional performance of an atan (circle dance) which originally had the function of preparing a tribe for war by facilitating their entry into a semi-ecstatic state (see Klimburg 1966:119), or in the late 1960s, by the performance of music and dance during the election campaigns of political candidates. More recently, Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami party, attempted to discredit Ahmad Shah Massoud, the pivotal leader of the United Front, by circulating an undated video which portrayed him as being entertained by a group of dancing boys (see Rzehak 1997:41:n8). The nexus between politics, religion and culture as manifest in the performances of music and dance will continue to be unravelled in the next two chapters.

145 The non-Islamic practice of dance was thus used as a means of charging Massoud with engagement in homoerotic activities. An even more interesting fact, however, is that the leader of Hezb-e Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was himself accused by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan of homosexual activities (see Olesen 1995: 263).
In all societies, cultural practices are regulated to some extent by convention — a fact that tacitly confirms their social value. Accordingly, performance events are “always shaped and constrained by cultural frameworks that rely on territory, community, institutions, and performative genres” (Lewis 1999:539). They are thus inextricable from their social, political and historical contexts. The previous chapters have introduced the controversial nature and challenges of performance in the Islamic context of Badakhshan, Afghanistan. In an attempt to elucidate the frameworks and meanings of particular performances, this chapter and that which follows will describe the nature, settings and circumstances of a range of cultural practices witnessed during field research in 1998 and 1999.

The performances of prayer, religious music, equestrian and wrestling tournaments, as well as entertainment music and dance, can be interpreted as variously positioned on a continuum of ritual and ritual-like practices. For example, *id-e qurban* may be understood as a pure ritual or as an explicitly ‘liminal’ event, in that there is a “high level of consensus in belief and practice” (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:209) as manifested by the “egalitarian solidarity and spiritual integration” of its participants (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:201n4). In contrast, *jeshen* (the public festival commemorating Independence Day) or *mehmanis* (private parties), although evincing elements of ritual, are less special or elaborated, and thus may be seen to concord with Turner’s notion of ‘liminoid’ practices. To facilitate comprehension of the positionings and meanings of performance events in the social and political context of Badakhshan, this analysis will utilise a number...
of binary categories that draw on either commonsense local terms (religious/non-religious) or my own (daily/special, public/private, indoor/outdoor, rare/common). However, as discussed in Chapter Two, since such dichotomisations are actually located on continua, I will also necessarily consider types of performance that occur ‘in between’ these categorical poles in an attempt to address the inherent dynamics “between official self-presentation and what goes on in the privacy of collective introspection” (Herzfeld 1997:14).

In Badakhshan, the most important distinctions of cultural practices accord with Islamic categories based on Sharia law. Specific religious terms classify whether a cultural practice is halal (that is, permissible according to Sharia law) or haram (that is, forbidden and/or illegitimate). This pragmatic differentiation is largely based on Islam’s normative texts and tends to reflect a binary categorisation in that a practice is usually perceived either as religious or non-religious, and therefore as legitimate or illegitimate. Yet, as can be seen from the discussion of al Faruqi’s model in Chapter Five, a number of Islamic categories and terms have the potential to vary considerably and to often overlap. Similarly, my observations of religious and cultural performances in Badakhshan confirmed the existence of the triadic classification of ‘halal-uncertain-haram’ and as a consequence and in contrast to the local Islamic-based binary categorisation of cultural practices, my use of theoretical constructs will primarily draw upon ternary categories. As noted in Chapter Two, this idea corresponds with Peirce’s semiotic phenomenology in which any binary relation requires “a third, mediating term” (Lewis 1995:239n19). While many cultural events were clearly sanctioned by Sharia law (such as the id prayers), others (such as those arising at mehmanis) were frequently mired in ambiguity. I believe therefore that the use of ternary categories will assist in elucidating the combination of features, for example religious and non-religious elements, in these less clearly defined events. Particular emphasis will be placed in both this and the next chapter on discussing what I have previously termed ‘aesthetic performances’. This categorisation allows me to distinguish between those performances, primarily dance and music but also some oral poetic traditions, which were prohibited from those that were not. ‘Aesthetic performances’ will be discussed here with respect to the public domain and will then be addressed more specifically in Chapter Seven when I

1 See Chapter Five, especially al Faruqi’s model of the hierarchy of handasah al sawt genres (1985:175-191).
2 Sufi music is such an example that calls for the recognition of borderline categories.
describe semi-public and private events. The sub-categories of public and private events, mediated by the category of semi-public or semi-private, are thus employed to highlight the contrasts and interrelations between performances and their contexts.

One of my primary aims in this analysis is to embed performances in the social and political world of Badakhshan and to provide Badakhshi individuals with a voice about their own practices. For that reason, each cultural performance will be interpreted and positioned in terms of local categories and descriptions such as: ‘this is buzkashi’, ‘this is local Badakhshi music’, or ‘this is local Badakhshi dance’. Moreover, given that the methodology of this thesis regards performances as polysemous sequences of signs “that bear culturally endowed meaning” (Parmentier 1987:11), each event will then be reflected upon more analytically, primarily through recourse to the sign relations identified through Peircean semiotics, even though for ease of comprehension, Peirce’s terminology will generally not be used explicitly. The complementary methodology of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) will also be drawn upon in order to elucidate the representation of bodily interactions or “physical dialogues” (Lewis 1992:12). In addition, the lyrics of most songs have been translated from Dari into English. Discussion of performance events is supplemented with brief audiovisual films which appear as QuickTime movie files on the accompanying CD ROMs. It is essential that these short films are viewed in conjunction with the relevant sections in the main text. This framing of social interactions supports the conscious and literal differentiation of a specific type of socio-cultural engagement from more common day-to-day community processes in Badakhshan. Unlike the historical examples of cultural performances that were mostly organised and ‘staged’ by influential others such as the researchers of the 1963 Stuttgart expedition, the performances I recorded in 1998 and 1999 arose relatively spontaneously; they were initiated by the local Badakhshis themselves and filmed by me. Hence, I suggest that analysis of these more authentic – or at least less contrived – events will be constructive in elucidating some of the salient themes and multiple sets of relationships inherent in the cultural performances of Badakhshan at the end of the twentieth century.

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3 See glossary of Peircean terms (Appendix Three).
4 See Chapter Two.
5 The songs were translated with the assistance of Dr Mohammad Torabi and Hafizullah Natiq.
Religious Performances

The id-e qurban Prayer in Sunni-dominated Faizabad

In Islam, especially in Shiism and orthodox Sunni Islam, a religious practice is usually understood as rule-bound, controlled and based on authoritative scriptural sources. Performed in a serious and respectful manner, Islamic religious practices tend to encourage inner experience rather than the overt expression of emotion or enjoyment. With the exception of the daily practice of namaz (prayers), religious events are clearly marked on the Islamic calendar and are thus framed as special events set apart from quotidian activities. Whilst such practices would tend to be viewed by orthodox Muslims as spiritual duties rather than as performances, the participation of the entire Muslim community and their enactment of simple, repetitive and predictable movements during these special events lead me to posit that such religious practices may be understood as religious performances. In 1998 and 1999, religious performances which were based on major Islamic traditions and clearly defined in Islam’s normative texts were patronised by both the Islamic State of Afghanistan and the Taliban and thus continued without restriction as obligatory practices. In contrast, religious practices that are expressed in a more aesthetic manner, such as Sufi practices that incorporate music and dance, were clearly not permitted by the Taliban, nor were they condoned by dominant Sunni leaders within the Rabbani Presidency nor within Badakhshan’s provincial government.

In Afghanistan, as in all Sunni and Shiite Muslim territories worldwide, two major religious festivals are celebrated annually: id-e ramazan and id-e qurban. Id-e ramazan (The Feast of the End of Ramadan) is a three-day celebration marking the end of the fasting month which occurs during the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Forty days after this holiday, a more elaborate celebration of three days duration, id-e qurban (The Feast of Sacrifice) commemorates Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail at the command of Allah. Id-e qurban is thus indexically linked (through a

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6 Namaz is a Persian noun for the Islamic prayer which is conducted five times a day.
7 Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures during the daylight period of this holy month. In Afghanistan, the celebration of id-e ramazan is also known as id fitr or id-e kalan.
8 This important feast in the Islamic calendar is celebrated on the tenth day of the month of Dhu al-Hijja.
Public Performances in Badakhshan

contiguous association) with Islamic tradition and heritage. Moreover, it is central to the construction of broader Islamic and local social identities. Participation in this ritual fosters a direct connection between Muslims’ personal and collective experiences. Memories and associations arising from past celebrations of this significant religious festival are linked to the present and future; as adults, men will recall attending this ritual as children with their fathers. Further, in contexts such as in Badakhshan, the practice functions as an important social and cultural touchstone wherein it serves as a sign of the lives of all id participants and not as “signs about them” (Turino 1999:236). Hence, the religious performance of id-e qurban reinforces individuals’ personal connections to a living and historical Islamic community.

Both the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996-2001) proclaimed by the Taliban militia and the Islamic State of Afghanistan (1992-2001) celebrated Islam’s normative rituals such as id-e qurban as major cultural events. In 1998, the sighting of the moon on the evening of 6 April introduced the beginning of id-e qurban in Faizabad. Rounds of tracer ammunition were shot into the air by Kalashnikov-carrying soldiers loyal to the United Front. The cacophony of bullets was not only heard, but the exploding bullets were visible from the region’s surrounding mountains. The following morning, ruz-e id (The Day of Id), as is customary in Afghanistan, children received new clothes and played the game of tokhum bazi.9 Later that morning, the Faizabad’s entire male population consisting primarily of Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, and numbering at least seven hundred people, congregated to publicly perform the id ritual at the maidan-e askari (military ground), the city’s id ground.10

The ritual began with a series of speeches by Badakhshan’s governor, Wali Sayyid Amin Tareq (a Sunni Tajik Badakhshi Islamist affiliated with the Jamiat-e Islami),11 and by a number of senior mullahs (representing Faizabad’s ulema). These political and religious authorities addressed Faizabad’s adult and

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9 The gift-giving tradition is also celebrated on the morning of id-e ramazan. Tokhum bazi is a Persian term for a game called ‘knocking eggs’ or literally ‘egg-fighting’. In this game, the two contestants are each equipped with an egg and in order to win, one has to break the other’s egg.  
10 Since Faizabad’s main mosque is too small to accommodate all participants, maidan-e askari serves as the main outdoor venue for the prayer. In Afghanistan, it is common to have a dedicated id ground. The maidan-e askari is also referred to as the maidan-e id (id ground) and is located at the outskirts of Faizabad, near the provincial government building and the Kokcha River in Shahr-e Kohne, the old part of town.  
11 In Afghanistan, the Arabic noun wali denotes the occupation of provincial governor (see also Glossary).
adolescent males who were seated on the ground on shawls or blankets and aligned in narrow parallel rows facing the presenters. This seating arrangement may be seen to bear an iconic relationship (through resemblance) to the sacred geography of Islam, since it physically and visually reproduced the alignment of Muslims in the courtyard of the al-Haram Mosque (Grand Mosque) in Mecca, as they face the Kabah, Islam's holiest shrine. During the speeches, the relatively relaxed phase of the celebration, some participants quietly chatted and several beggars circulated through the narrow seated rows, collecting zakat (alms). It is the duty of every Muslim, as a member of the umma (Islamic community), to give alms to the poor on such religious occasions. This direct action of 'giving' money to disadvantaged members of the community is symbolically connected to religious purification. Badakhshan Television, Afghanistan's only television station at that time was also present to film the id speeches which were broadcast later in the afternoon.

The id speeches were followed by more sacred practices, in particular the public communal prayer of the id-e namaz (id prayer). As specified in the normative texts, the namaz is one of the five obligatory daily prayers which every Sunni and Shiite Muslim is required to perform. Normally performed individually in private homes, the prayer is publicly and communally performed during joma (Muslims’ obligatory Friday midday prayer and rest day) as well as during important religious festivals such as the two ids. Yet

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12 While several boys had accompanied their fathers, girls and women were not present at this ritual. The speeches were amplified with the assistance of a microphone connected to a small battery-operated amplifier. They could thus be heard throughout large parts of the residential areas of Faizabad.

13 The Kabah is a cube-like building in which the al-hajar al-aswad (Black Stone) is located. It is interesting to note that the Kabah itself is infused with spiritual force (baraka) which is iconic with the power of Allah.

14 It is important to appreciate that the Faizabad television station is not comparable to broadcasting offices in developing or developed countries. The television station functions more at the level of a small rural community broadcaster. The broadcasting equipment was relatively professional and was originally set up by Soviet technicians in the 1980s. The only recipients of this local station in Badakhshan were the few households in Faizabad that owned a battery-operated television set. As a consequence of a lack of electricity in the entire province, any electrical equipment necessitates battery operation and thus requires the purchase of batteries which were considered to be expensive luxury items in Badakhshan. Since the beginning of Islamic governance in 1992, the content of the television programs has been almost exclusively religious in nature, with occasional government announcements. The station manager, however, showed me some of the archives which included old fiction movies, as well as music and dance programs that were recorded during the Communist period.

15 Twelver Shiite performances of namaz are basically similar to those of the Sunnis. The minor differences in execution are not relevant to this discussion.
unlike the namaz-e joma which is conducted as a weekly observance in a mosque, namaz-e id commonly attracts all members of Faizabad’s umma and for that reason, is held at a large outdoor venue.

As a special form of the daily namaz, the namaz-e id uses a similar normatively-specified number of physical movements and recitations of fixed liturgical texts (see Kusic 1996). The structure of the prayer includes the physical actions of qiyam (standing), rakat (bowing), sajda (prostration), and qowud (sitting) which are performed while the participants silently or barely audibly recite the Quranic texts (see Kusic 1997). The prayer is always (indexically) oriented in the direction known as qibla, that is towards Mecca and the Kabah, and its ritual movements constitute important habits that are in turn, concrete manifestations of social and cultural identity as well as group cohesion. This orthopraxy may thus be seen to be an index of the obedience of Islamic communities to Allah, as indicated by the Quran, and as culturally uniting Muslims worldwide (see Anderson 1991:170-171). Through their engagement in this ritual, therefore, the participants of the id-e qurban in Faizabad were indexically, symbolically and iconically connected with the original Muslim community in what is now Saudi Arabia [view movie clip eidprayer.mov; CD ROM 1].

The physical movements of the members of the namaz-e id congregation are performed on a sagittal plane towards qibla, which reinforces the indexical link with Mecca. All participants adopt a narrow base of support (feet close together) and move their arms minimally within their “kinesphere”. In marked contrast to the ‘gestural’ movement characteristics of the non-religious dances that will be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Seven, in which the arms predominate and move in a range of different directions, the physical actions of the namaz are mostly executed in a ‘postural’ fashion, that is they tend to maintain the alignment of the body. Moving from a neutrally erect

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16 See glossary (Appendix One) for additional information and the spelling of these prescribed physical movements.
17 The use of the LMA term ‘sagittal plane’ may be understood as primarily having a forward-backward and, secondarily, an up-down orientation.
18 A person’s ‘base of support’ is a LMA category providing information on the general use of the body and thereby on postural characteristics and types of weight transference. The limit of a performer’s capacity to reach into space without having to shift his or her position, has been termed a person’s “kinesphere” (Dell 1977:69). See Appendix Four for a glossary of LMA terms.
19 The terms ‘gestural’ and ‘postural’ are used to describe the actual involvement of the person’s body in movement. ‘Gestural’ movements refer to those movements in which only a
starting position, the id participants in Faizabad gradually lowered their bodies by flexing their trunks, hips and knees until their knees touched the earth. During the final prostration, the men’s arms first reached towards the ground so as to support their bodies while their foreheads touched the ground. The movements of this ritual were thus characterised by restraint, control and precision, qualities which accord with Laban’s concept of ‘bound flow’.  

In addition to these prescribed physical movements, the namaz also incorporates linguistic elements, which have symbolic, yet personal and contextual meaning for participants. The mullah’s recitation of the sacred words ‘Allah-u Akbar’ (God is Great), for example, may be interpreted as ‘God is Great (and I am small)’, and hence that human life has small significance within the greater context of humanity and, for that reason, may be surrendered. Alternatively, the sacred words may also be interpreted as ‘God is Great (so I am empowered)’ in the sense that a Muslim’s life may be strengthened and uplifted by the ‘Greatness of God’. Hence, while the individual life of a devout Muslim may not be viewed as greatly valuable in the context of the whole of creation, it is important since a devout life glorifies God and may empower fellow Muslims. This paradox of significance can be seen in the extreme case of suicide bombings during which militant Muslims are known to utter ‘Allah-u Akbar’ before sacrificing their lives, an action which renders them martyrs and which testifies to the simultaneous insignificance and the significant impact of individual lives and deaths.

Whether performed in private, public, indoor, or outdoor domains, namaz is always marked by a serious demeanour, a sign of inward fervour. The worshipper believes that Allah is present during the prayer and that Allah is aware of the worshipper’s presence. The act of praying brings each member of the umma into a direct and contiguous relationship with Allah. It is therefore likely that most participants at Faizabad’s namaz-e id experienced a heightened part of the performer’s body predominates. By comparison, the term ‘postural’ is applied to movements employing the whole body (see Dell 1977:79).

'Bound flow' may be understood as “the apparent quality of controlling the flow of movement through the body (as opposed to a visible intent to release that movement flow out and beyond the body’s limits)” (Ness 1996:149n25) and is one four Laban effort qualities (Flow, Weight, Time, Space). Moreover, the spatial path of the participants was strictly direct, utilising both sagittal and vertical dimensions. In Laban’s system, each dimension may be understood as travelling along a linear direction from one point to another. A limitation of the three dimensions is a person’s ‘kinesphere’ (see Dell 1977:69). The sagittal dimension, therefore, has a forward-backward orientation, and the vertical dimension an up-down orientation (see Appendix Four).
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awareness of their Muslim identity, in terms of the cultural imaginary of the unity of Islam particularly within the context of north-eastern Afghanistan that was controlled by the United Front.

With the conclusion of the official speeches and the public performance of the final group prayer, the men and boys returned to their respective homes, walking slowly in small clusters of relatives and friends. Later, within the confines of the private residences of those families who could afford it, a sheep or a calf was ritualistically sacrificed and its meat distributed in equal portions to close relatives, neighbours and the poor. For the rest of that day, and over the following days, groups of gender-separated adults and their children visited each other’s homes. The men met in the khushkhana (guestroom) of a residence, whereas the women gathered in specifically designated female spaces within the house. During these reciprocal visits to relatives in the neighbourhood, guests sat on carpets on the floor and rested against cushions which were placed against the walls of the rooms. A dastar khwan (dining cloth) was spread out in the centre of the room and covered with small plates of sweets, such as noql (sugar-coated nuts), thermoses filled with the ubiquitous green or black tea, as well as urns with the popular Badakhshi beverage shir chai (milk tea). Mastawa, a lentil and barley soup, the meat of the qurbani (the animal sacrificed during the id ritual) as well as a specially made kulcha (hard biscuit), are the main dishes consumed during this time.21

During the id festivities of 1998 and 1999, while the majority of Muslims in Faizabad and for that matter Badakhshan, adhered to the prescribed norms of namaz, other public cultural practices were either permitted – sport – or severely restricted, if not prohibited altogether – music or dancing. These bans corresponded with the rise of orthodox Islam in the province and the tacit and at times overt categorisation of all non-religious aesthetic entertainment as un-Islamic (see Chapter Five). In comparison, prior to 1992, aesthetic entertainment periodically accompanied such religious festivals. But during my field research, only the unaccompanied recitation of religious texts, which was characterised by mellifluous intonations, was condoned during the namaz, since this aesthetic cultural style is not marked in any Muslim society as a form of aesthetic practice (see Baily 2001:21; Kusic 1996).

21 Kulcha is a hard, round cookie which is prepared by women two to three days before the id celebration. Together with shir chai and halwa sabodi (a dessert made with milk and pistachios), these three food items were considered by most Badakhshis to be culinary specialities unique to Badakhshan.
Ismaili Religious Music

A critical difference between Badakhshan's two major sectarian groups of the Hanafi Sunnis and Sevener Shiite Nizari Ismailis lies in their divergent attitudes towards the incorporation of aesthetic expression in their religious praxis. The majority Sunni population of the province is clearly guided by authorised interpretations of normative texts and their religious praxis, as elsewhere in Afghanistan, is marked by a total absence of instrumental musical accompaniment. In contrast, while their religious doctrines are less transparent to outsiders, Ismaili communities in Badakhshan are considerably more tolerant towards the inclusion of music and poetry. In fact, the incorporation of religious oral literature such as the *qasidas* or *ghazals* of Nasir Khusraw or other influential Persian Sufi poets, particularly Hafez and Rumi, and accompanied by vocal and instrumental music played on local and/or regional instruments (Pamiri *rubab*, *daf*, *zirbaghali*, and *ghichak*), is an important mode of cultural differentiation between the two Islamic sects. Under certain conditions such as religious education, musical accompaniment may serve as an acceptable feature of Ismaili religious praxis, whereas dance is always strictly prohibited in a religious context.

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22 Prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan however, the religious praxis of the Chishtiya order, which was particularly well-represented in Kabul and Herat, would have included vocal and instrumental music (Afghan *rubab*, harmonium, *tabla*) during religious events. Most members of this order became either refugees in Pakistan (predominantly Peshawar) or would have stopped using instruments during the period of Afghanistan’s cultural confusion (1992-2001). Personal communication with a *pir* of a Chishtiya-affiliated *khanaqa* in Peshawar, August 1998.

23 While Twelver Shiite doctrines are also fixed by normative traditions, in contrast to Sunni Islamic performances, Iranian Shiites engage each year in a major religious performance that includes aesthetic expression - the *taziye* (see Beeman 1992; Chelkowski 1979). In the context of this thesis however, I am specifically referring to Sevener Shiite Islam as practised locally in Badakhshan. A detailed analysis of the significant and complex Sunni-Ismaili differences in Badakhshan is not within the scope of this thesis.

24 A *qasida* is an Arabic noun for a lyrical ‘ode’, a common verse form used in classical Arab and Persian music (Shiloah 2001), whereas a *ghazal*, an Arabic noun for a short poem, literally means ‘to talk amorously with women’ (see Powers 2001). The *ghazal* is often influenced by Sufism; it is metaphysical and philosophical, while its common themes of love make it superficially appear to be sensual and erotic. Refer to the appended glossary (Appendix One) for further information on these poetic genres. The string and percussion instruments mentioned here will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The fourteenth century Persian poet Shamsuddin Mohammad, also known as Hafez (circa 1320-1389), was from Shiraz.

25 Khalifa Gul Mohammad, the local Ismaili leader in Chashma Bozurg, firmly stressed this point about the prohibition of dance in a religious setting in 1999. Many Afghan Ismaili Badakhshis accuse their relatives and co-Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan, of having combined religious music with non-religious entertainment genres from the time they were
As a musical tradition, Ismaili religious music has received very limited scholarly attention. Although music research was undertaken in the Pamir region by the Russian musicologist Viktor Beliaev (1975) and the American ethnomusicologists Mark Slobin (1976) and Lorraine Sakata (1983), little was written on this genre until the Dutch linguist Gabrielle van den Berg and musicologist Jan van Belle conducted research into the religious music and poetry of the Ismailis in Gorno-Badakhshan in southern Tajikistan (van den Berg 1997; van den Berg 1998; van den Berg and van Belle 1993-1995). In 1998, during my first visit to the Ismaili region of Buz Dara in north-eastern Badakhshan, neither my informants nor the Ismaili authorities commented on the existence of religious music genres. Over the course of interviews about extant artistic practices, I was told only about the genres of music and dance that are performed predominantly during weddings. However, in the summer of 1999, when travelling in this region towards the end of my second field trip to Buz Dara, I was fortunate to record some religious Ismaili songs in Chashma Bozurg, a nearby village. After noticing numerous Pamiri rubabs (six-stringed lutes) in the houses of many local Ismaili residents in the Buz Dara region, I inquired about specialist performers of this local instrument. It was in this context that two local Ismaili political authorities, Habib Shah and Qasim, who were both wakils (delegates) and landowners (zamindars), informed me of the existence of two musicians in Chashma Bozurg. The first, Gul Mohammad, was the khalifa (Ismaili religious leader) of Chashma Bozurg, who had an excellent reputation in the wider Buz Dara communities as a performer of religious songs and as a player of the Pamiri rubab. The other musician was his brother Nasruddin, also a Pamiri rubab player.

Initially, I was unable to contact Gul Mohammad, since he was often away, visiting nearby villages in his capacity as khalifa and performing duties such as officiating at funeral services. When I finally met with him in his residence, he talked to me about an Ismaili religious music genre which he referred to as qasida (a form of religious poetry). Yet he stressed that this type of public music is usually only played by Ismailis during special religious events that integrated into the former Soviet Union. In comparison, in South Asia, Ismailis have developed an artistic genre, ginans (songs), which integrates poetry and music in local vernaculars and is performed in both religious and non-religious settings (see Nanji 1987).

Pamiri pertains to the Pamir region or an inhabitant of the Pamir region in north-eastern Badakhshan (see also Chapter Three). Rubab is a Persianised version of the Arabic noun for lute.
arise in the idle periods of the winter months. Unfortunately, the logistical inaccessibility of this isolated Ismaili territory in the Pamir mountains made it impossible for me to reach this region during winter and consequently, I was unable to attend any Ismaili religious ceremonies during my field research. However, Gul Mohammad, together with Nasruddin and Abdul Qadir, a fellow-villager from Chashma Bozurg, who played the zirbaghali (a goblet-shaped clay drum with a single membrane), offered to perform a number of religious songs in a non-religious and semi-public setting for the purpose of demonstration. This performance of religious Ismaili music is thus an example of how a religious event may be dynamically positioned on a continuum of private and public, in accordance with the particular context. While this music is traditionally performed publicly, it is only done so for the Ismailis of this region. Within the context of the influential Sunni minority who coexist with the Ismailis in this region, this genre is controversial and performances are thus private and secretive events. In my case, the religious music performance assumed the characteristics of a semi-public event. Whilst Chashma Bozurg is an Ismaili village, the performance took place during daylight but in the restricted space of Gul Mohammad’s house. It seemed that the performers preferred to keep the performance somewhat restricted, perhaps to ensure that it was not audible or visible to conservative Sunnis who may have been passing through the village.

The songs performed on this occasion were attributed to well-known Persian poets such as Shams-e Tabriz, Jalal al-Din Rumi and Nasir Khusraw, in addition to local poets. The reference to the poetry of Nasir Khusraw is especially significant, given that this classical Persian poet is one of the strongest spiritual influences for the Nizari Ismaili community of the Pamir region (see Chapter Five). The movie clip from this performance is entitled “Rawan” (literally, ‘flowing’ or ‘Soul/Life’) [view song rawan.mov; CD ROM 2], and is an example of one such local Ismaili musical genre, a qasida, which was performed in local Pamiri dialect and may be understood as an embodied, sonic cultural marker. The musicians knew the poet, title and the genre of this song, and had memorised it as an oral tradition, having adopted several stanzas from “Rawan” in Nasir Khusraw’s Diwan (‘Collection of Poems’) (Khusraw in Taqavi 1929:230-232). While the stanzas of this qasida

27 Van den Berg and van Belle refer to the religious music of the Ismaili in Tajikistani Badakhshan as madah (panegy) and ghazal (see van den Berg and van Belle 1994:11).
are difficult to understand, a particularly noticeable feature is the repetition of the poet’s name. This feature may be understood as an indexical sign, a direct link to the period of the poet’s life in the eleventh century and perhaps by extension, to the expansion of Ismailism during the Fatimid period. Indeed, an historical link between Nasir Khusraw and musical expression in Ismailism was discussed in Chapter Five, with respect to the description by Mahmud bin Wali of his visit to Nasir Khusraw’s shrine in Hazrat-e Sayyid in the seventeenth century.

The Pamiri rubab, the main instrument in this event and which was also referred to in Wali’s account, continues to hold an important place in the culture of Badakhshan’s Ismailis. This short-necked, fretless lute has a retracted peg box and a bowl-shaped belly, which gives this instrument a very different appearance from the more common Afghan rubab which will be discussed later in this chapter. Five of the six strings of the Pamiri rubab are attached to the peg box with wooden pegs, whereas the sixth and most superior string connects at mid-level to the neck of the lute. The rubab is plucked with a triangular-shaped wooden plectrum which is often attached to the back of the soundbox via a piece of gut string. A small wooden bridge is also inserted between the soundbox and the dorsal side of the strings. Since it is not played by any other ethnic or sectarian group in Afghanistan, the Pamiri rubab functions as an index of Ismaili identity. Moreover, it is contiguously related to Ismaili religious education and cosmology due to its use during the performances of religious texts. In contrast, the zirbaghali is a popular drum used in northern Afghanistan as a non-religious instrument.

Musically, the song differed from others that I recorded in Badakhshan. It was sung primarily by the two Pamiri rubab players Gul Mohammad and Nasruddin, while Abdul Qadir, the zirbaghali player provided additional backing vocals. Although it was not entirely clear as to who was leading what – the musicians’ singing or their lute playing – the voices seemed to imitate the

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28 As a result of the Pamiri dialect, both Afghan and Persian translators encountered difficulties with the translation of this song.

29 The Pamiri rubab is tuned approximately to F Sharp, which seems to act here as a tonic. In Western music, the tonic may be understood as the key note of a major-minor tonal system. The first two strings of the Pamiri rubab, that is the bottom two strings, are tuned in unison approximately to the tonic of F Sharp, the third and fourth strings are also tuned in unison to a fifth to approximately C Sharp. The fifth string is tuned to a low F Sharp whereas, the sixth and uppermost string appears to be tuned to C Sharp. All strings of the Pamiri rubab are made of gut.
sound of the *rubabs*. The vocalisation was characterised by the singers' momentary sustaining of the last syllable at the end of each poetic phrase as a long note. The pitch of their voices periodically seemed to go up a note and then down again. Their vocalisation was characterised by a 'throaty' and 'nasal' quality that seems to have been the result of 'back of the throat' singing. The mood of the *qasida* appeared to be extremely solemn.\(^{30}\) The rhythmic pattern was not even and appeared to fluctuate between duple and triple meters.\(^{31}\) Another unique characteristic was the percussive style of strumming effected by the *rubab* players, which had a rhythmic function and which markedly contrasted the more melodic strumming of the lute players in the forthcoming music examples.\(^{32}\) The drummer followed the strumming of the lutes and the rhythm of the song, in an *ostinato* style (that is with a frequently repeated musical structure), while also continuously appearing to be switching from a duple to a triple metre. From a Western musicological point of view, the musicians gave the impression of being 'out of rhythm' at the beginning of the track. In fact, it seems that the Pamiri *rubab* players corrected the rhythm of the *zirbaghali* player at the beginning of the song (0:15).\(^{33}\)

Analysis of the category of religious performances has confirmed that normative Islamic religious practices continued publicly in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999. In contrast, the religious music of the Ismailis was performed publicly only for Ismailis. With respect to the presence of the politically dominant Sunni Badakhshis in the region, the religious music events occurred somewhat more privately and only in the absence of non-Ismailis. The Ismaili religious song of "*Rawan*" is therefore the rarest form of musical artistic expression that I recorded during 1998 and 1999. Indeed, it would have been unthinkable for a Sunni mullah to condone such a musical performance in Badakhshan, or even to accompany religious texts with a musical instrument at

\(^{30}\) This singing style may be defined by Slobin's (1976:125) description of "a parlando-rubato style (rhythm associated with declamatory speech patterns)."

\(^{31}\) These metres varied between a 'shuffled', uneven rhythm (\(1 \quad 2 \quad 3\)) and a 'straight', even rhythm (\(1 \quad 2\)). The first two underscores here represent two uneven 'shuffled' beats between a rest, whereas the second underscores represent two even pulses.

\(^{32}\) The song’s melodic structure seems to have been performed over a whole octave ranging from approximately C to C. The lower pitch of C was used by the lutes as the tonal centre for the drone string. The musical phrase included an ascending pattern, then a pattern that descended to its resolution of the drone note. The middle of the phrase was usually performed against the drone, which was then resolved in the second half of the section. The slower pulse was played as a steady beat, whereas the more rhythmic pulse seemed uneven and fluctuated between duple and triple beats.

\(^{33}\) In this chapter, the numbers which appear in parentheses indicate the exact location of the text’s reference on the respective movie track.
any time. The determined local efforts to keep this aesthetic religious tradition alive during Afghanistan’s Taliban era is highlighted in the following statement by Nasruddin, the Pamiri *rubab* player:

We have kept this music secret, since the Sunnis don’t like it. During the previous regime, the Communist authorities were only interested in our entertainment music such as the music we perform at weddings and other parties, but they did not approve of our religious music. Now that the situation is likely to further deteriorate, we feel that it is important that we play our music to foreigners before it is lost altogether. When the Taliban arrive, the first thing that they will do is ban our music and destroy our instruments. 34

**Non-Religious Performances**

**Sporting Contests at National Commemorations**

*Nowruz* is a popular commemorative festival in Afghanistan and celebrates the appearance of the vernal equinox and the arrival of spring around March 21. 35 In Badakhshan, this festival also unofficially marks the end of winter and the concomitant isolation of many valleys and villages. 36 Until the rise of the Taliban, the *nowruz* festival was celebrated as a holiday throughout all Persian-speaking regions of Afghanistan, including the capital Kabul. Traditionally, it included music and dance performances and also recreational events such as equestrian sport, wrestling and amusements at the *nowruz* fair. In the 1960s, in some of Afghanistan’s urban centres, the festival was celebrated for a period of forty days (see Slobin 1976:40). In Mazar-e Sharif, for example, a special entertainment quarter for music, dance and story-telling events was established by local authorities near the shrine and mosque of Hazrat Ali (see Slobin 1976:146). Slobin also mentions the highly popular performances of Pushtun dancing boys from the provinces of Kabul and Logar that occurred in Mazar-e Sharif during this time (1976:146). Similar *nowruz* celebrations were observed by Sakata in Herat in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Sakata 1983:18):

... during the thirteen days following the first Wednesday of the New Year...the people

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34 Personal communication with Nasruddin, Chashma Bozurg, August 1999.
35 *Nowruz* is a Persian word that literally translates as ‘new day’ and refers to the New Year of many Persian-speaking communities. This festival seems to have incorporated Zoroastrian elements in which the new life of spring is seen to represent the triumph of goodness over the forces of evil which are portrayed by the darkness of winter.
36 Spring does not appear uniformly in all of the province’s districts. In some high altitude districts, such as Buz Dara, winter continues throughout the month of March.
of Herat and the surrounding areas like to go on picnics and outings (mela). During this time people within the city gather in the parks to pass the day with friends, talking, eating and listening to music...This is a busy time for vendors and musicians...Some musicians go from house to house offering a little entertainment for a small fee to those who stay at home. Besides the traditional outings, sporting events such as wrestling matches are common at this time.

During the Communist governments (1978-1992), nowruz was celebrated in Faizabad for seven days. The evening before the festival commenced, women, boys and girls would generally paint their hands with henna, while men would generally colour a single finger. On the first morning of nowruz, many people, particularly women dressed in their new clothes, would visit the shrine of the local Naqshbandi Sufi poet Ghiasi, to witness the janda bala kardan (Raising of the Standard). On that occasion, the descendants of Ghiasi were also known to give money and food to the poor. In the late morning, the residents of Faizabad would then proceed to the grounds of the provincial government to participate in a tree-planting ceremony. In the afternoon, men, women and children would congregate at a ground on the outskirts of Faizabad to visit the numerous stalls set up by government departments and individual families that offered non-alcoholic drinks and food. Occasionally, stall owners hired amateur or professional musicians from Badakhshan or even Kabul to provide entertainment.

The subsequent first Islamic Government under President Rabbani continued to endorse the nowruz tradition as a national holiday. In urban centres such as

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37 The following accounts stem from the conversation with an expatriate Afghan, former member of the Badakhshi elite, 2000. While I have no records of the modern period in Badakhshan under King Zahir Shah and Mohammad Daoud (other than the accounts given by Slobin and Sakata), it seems likely that many of the observations recorded here also pertained to the period prior to Communist rule.

38 Ghiasi lived in the 1750s and, according to local legend, was originally from Jurm (Personal communication, elite Badakhshi, Faizabad, 1998). Since the local population at that time did not appreciate his Sufi inclinations, he emigrated to India. In old age, he returned to Badakhshan and died in Faizabad. His ziarat is to be found in Faizabad’s Shahr-e Kohne district. On the night preceding each of the festivals of nowruz and id, local disciples gather at his shrine and silently pray and perform the practice of zikr. I was told that, traditionally, at the beginning of the nowruz festival, the janda (a standard, that is pieces of textiles strung on a pole) is raised at his shrine. This event parallels the raising of the flag at the mosque of Hazrat Ali in Mazar-e Sharif, but on a much smaller scale and with a smaller crowd. In this ritual in Faizabad, local Sufis gather at the shrine of Ghiasi for silent prayers, after which the old pole is lowered and people attempt to snatch the old, colourful materials that adorn it. These pieces of textile have spiritual value for the locals. Subsequently, the new flag with its new adornments is raised.

39 Personal communication from Badakhshi expatriate, Australia, 2001.
Public Performances in Badakhshan

Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif or Herat, special programs for farmers and recreational activities such as equestrian competitions were commonly organised; aesthetic practices, however, were not a major emphasis. In 1998, I observed two types of rule-bound games that had historically been played in accordance with oral traditions: *buzkashi* (equestrian tournament) and *kushtı giri* (wrestling). Local informants stated that the European games of volleyball and soccer were also popular, but were restricted by the lack of available specialised equipment. In comparison, the local sports of *buzkashi* and wrestling required little, if any, formal equipment.

On 28 March 1998, I participated in the final days of the *nowruz* festivities at the *maidan-e sang-e mahr* (the ground of the Mahr Stone), a public space in Faizabad’s Shahr-e Naw district, the history of which was described in Chapter Four. During Badakhshan’s modern period under King Zahir Shah (until 1973), President Mohammad Daoud (1973-1978) and the Communist leaders (up until the late 1980s), the *maidan-e sang-e mahr* had functioned as the site for Faizabad’s temporary outdoor theatre. This theatre was run by students and occasionally, plays were performed at public festivals such as *jeshen*. However, with the onset of fighting between government troops loyal to the Communist regime and mujahideen forces in the late 1980s, the theatre had ceased to operate. For the purpose of the *nowruz* equestrian tournament in March 1998, however, a VIP lounge had been temporarily assembled on the *maidan-e sang-e mahr*, at the top of the former outdoor entertainment structure.

The participants of this annual public celebration comprised Faizabad’s adult male population as well as local boys and girls who had travelled by foot, horse, donkey, or on the back of a Kamaz (a Soviet-made transport truck), to attend the primary entertainment attractions for this *nowruz*: an equestrian and wrestling tournament and the typical *charkhak* (a fair). After the quiet and relative solitude of winter, the *nowruz* fair is a chance for men to socialise and for children to play before they must devote their lives to studying and working to support their families. In 1998, the *charkhak* offered a range of recreational

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40 Personal communication from Dr Najibullah Lafraie, March 2001.
41 Sport balls were not readily available in the main bazaars of Faizabad, Dasht-e Islam and Bagh-e Zard and had to be imported from Pakistan, Iran or Tajikistan.
42 This *maidan-e sang-e mahr* is different from the id ground mentioned earlier.
43 Personal communication with a member of Badakhshi elite, Faizabad, 1998.
44 The fair is locally referred to as *charkhak*, possibly referring to the amusement activities such as *charkh-e falak* (ferris wheels) and merry-go-rounds once common at these fairs.
amusements including rifle shooting, manually-operated merry-go-rounds and swings, as well as stalls and hawkers selling pistachio nuts, sultanas, biscuits, sugar-coated almonds, roasted chick peas, sunflower seeds, cups of Kokcha River water, and homemade soft drinks. Men gathered at the samovars (temporary tea-houses) and engaged in conversation with friends. The seats of one of the merry-go-rounds built during the Communist period were shaped in the form of military rockets and planes, while those of another had seats shaped like horses. Local boys playfully expressed aggressive male behaviour as imitating mujahideen or chapandazan (riders), they 'rode' the merry-go-rounds' rockets, planes or buzkashi horses. Horses and rockets were thereby conjoined as past and present indices of male aggression.

The highlight of the annual nowruz festivities in Badakhshan continues to be the traditional horse tournament buzkashi. Historically, buzkashi in this province accompanied special events such as weddings, the end of Ramadan, the birthday of King Zahir Shah, visits by VIPs, other festivities such as jeshen (Afghanistan's Independence day), and, as in this case, nowruz (see Gratzl and Grancy 1973:64; Kussmaul 1965:64). Buzkashi is an open and vivid expression of masculinity, a display of "courage, strength, [and] dominance" (Azoy 1982:12). For the duration of this festive week, the equestrian tournament was held for approximately three hours each afternoon in Faizabad on the maidan-e sang-e mahr. Prominent leaders such as President Rabbani and the provincial governor of Badakhshan, Sayyid Amin Tareq, as well as important United Front commanders, were seated on the temporary VIP stage and were provided with a basic tea service. The almost exclusively male audience encircled the entire buzkashi grounds, with the majority concentrated near the officials and the fair. As a result of the orthodox Islamic values espoused by the Rabbani government at that time, clearly demarcated male and female domains existed.

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45 Samovar is a Russian term for a teahouse, otherwise known in Dari as a chaikhana.
46 Chapandazan is the Persian plural of chapandaz (rider). This Dari term is mostly used in northern Afghanistan and stems from the noun chapan (coat). In the past, a buzkashi champion, a chapandaz, was presented with a chapan as a prize, hence the name.
47 Interestingly, the horse is a key theme in the cultural system of Badakhshan, being strongly linked to nomadism and pastoralism, and of course, vital to the traditional sport of buzkashi (see below).
48 The Persian word buzkashi literally means 'goat-snatching'. This equestrian game is common not only to Persian and Turkic-speaking peoples in northern Afghanistan, but also throughout the wider trans-Oxus region of Central Asia (see Parkes 1996:44). It is not exactly clear when the goat was replaced by a calf. Informants told me that the calf is more suitable to this game, perhaps referring to its greater sturdiness.
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throughout the province and women were unable to participate actively in public celebrations. Nevertheless, in 1998, some sixty women watched the festivities from a distance by standing on the flat roofs of residences near to the field. Their white, green or blue burqas rendered them only faintly noticeable. It seems that even during the Communist period, however, women rarely attended buzkashi or public festivals in Badakhshan, but used this opportunity to visit relatives or to organise a picnic with the friends and relatives of recently married women, since the remainder of Faizabad was virtually deserted [view movie clip buzkashi.mov; CD ROM 1].

The buzkashi ground is roughly the size of two-to-three soccer fields and was marked by a small circle engraved in the dry soil and by a blue flag pole placed at the opposite end of the field near the fair. Male riders aim to score points by grabbing the headless body of a calf, which acts as a ball, riding around the flag pole and then placing the calf with great skill in the designated circle before another competitor snatches it again. The challenge is to grab the carcass, lift it to the saddle and then to ride with it while being attacked by members of the opposite team who aim to prevent the carcass from being placed in the circle. In order to avoid falling off their horses, the chapandazan necessarily adapted their trunks in a ‘postural’ supportive fashion, while using their arms in a ‘gestural’ manner. Due to the large number of competitors in the Faizabad tournament, and the concomitant high risk of injury, the riders, whilst confined to the saddles of their horses, skilfully ‘shaped’ their bodies by extending their torsos to the limit of their kinespheres. This shaping was especially evident when the competitors were engaged in melées and when their bodies had to adapt quickly to the limited available space. Most movements were performed as ‘directional, spoke-like’ actions with a ‘bound’ movement quality. Riders’ legs in particular were ‘bound’ due to the need to hold on, while their arms were freer and alternated between holding and pulling. This effort was prevalent throughout the game, since any relaxation was potentially hazardous. ‘Strong’ physical actions were executed in grabbing the calf and galloping to escape a mêlée, sudden and ‘quick’ actions were essential to charge rapidly so as to score a point, whereas ‘sustained’ movements were required to hold onto the calf while others attempted to pull the carcass away.  

49 Personal communication with female Badakhshi expatriate, Australia, 2000.
50 See Appendix Four for LMA terms.
The calves are usually donated by the government and are ritualistically decapitated on the field; the headless carcass can easily weigh up to seventy kilograms. A good *chapandaz* therefore not only has to be an excellent horseman but also a good wrestler in order to fend off many co-contestants. Different teams of *chapandazan*, who are marked by either red or green ribbons pinned onto the back of their shirts, compete for the calf. Once a rider has triumphantly dropped the carcass in the nominated circle, usually to the accompaniment of the entertaining commentary of the announcer and the roaring applause of the audience, the *chapandaz* approaches the refereeing officials and is firstly presented with a red ribbon which is attached to one of the horse's ears, and then secondly and most usually by the owner of the horse, with a wad of Afghan money or occasionally with US dollar notes.

The physical and often aggressive nature of *buzkashi* means that injuries are virtually inevitable, but due to the excellent training of the horses and the incredible coordination between riders and horses, fatal accidents are relatively rare and the hooves of the horses generally stay clear of a dismounted rider (see also Dupree 1970:18). This is fortunate given that none of the riders wears any form of protective clothing. Strict sporting dress regulations, as demanded by Taliban authorities, were not enforced during the *buzkashi* tournament in Faizabad. Indeed, for the most part, the horsemen in 1998 wore a range of clothing styles of their own choosing: the *shalwar qamiz*, the ubiquitous Afghan male attire, 51 military uniforms representing the Islamic State of Afghanistan, 52 as well as the more traditional *buzkashi* outfit consisting of a short, dense cotton jacket, *shawalak* (thick calf-length woollen trousers), and *muza* (knee-length boots).

One of the most distinguishing features of a *chapandaz* is his headwear. Many riders don a *telpak*, the traditional *buzkashi* fur-trimmed hat, whereas others prefer to wear a *taqin* (local skull caps) and a turban, the headwear commonly worn by Badakhshi men. 53 Some competitors, however, appeared in *pakol's*

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51 Over the last two decades and reflecting a strong Pakistani influence, the *shalwar qamiz* has become the most common form of attire worn by Afghan men. It consists of a long, loose shirt that reaches to the level of the knee and baggy trousers that are fastened by a piece of string. Formerly, a shirt and trousers were known in Afghanistan as *tombon wa pirahan*.

52 During my research, the military clothing itself was an index of the Rabbani-led Jamiat faction with many of its members originating from Rabbani's Faizabad shura. This clothing differed slightly from that of Massoud's *shura-e nazar* military personnel.

53 A *telpak* is a fur-trimmed hat and is possibly an Uzbek noun. A *taqin* is an Arabic noun for a skullcap. In Badakhshan, the *taqin* is usually embroidered and has a curved top and is worn under the turban.
(rolled woollen caps), which were symbolic of their political affiliation with the Jamiat-e Islami and United Front and indexically linked with Ahmad Shah Massoud who was well-known for his appearances in his trademark cap. The headwear in particular served as an index for political factions, since a hat’s form directly pinpointed a player’s political affiliation, and was clearly understood as such by both participants and members of the audience. In contrast, other types of headwear such as taqins and their accompanying turbans were indexically associated with local culture and traditional costumes that had been worn prior to the civil war. The fact that some participants did not use any head covering at all was also significant. Such acts of sartorial defiance would have been punishable offences in Taliban-held territories since they contravened the militia’s code of appropriate Islamic dress. It is possible that these competitors were defying what seemed to them to be nonsensical regulations, their bare heads signifying their freedom in the comparatively more liberal environment of Badakhshan.

An integral feature of this equestrian Afghan heritage is the participation of the audience. Not unlike the bulls charging through the narrow streets in Spain during local festivals, the buzkashi audience in Badakhshan also seeks the thrills of being as close as possible to the action. As soon as the riders charge through the field, boundaries between riders and audience become very loose and the horses, often covered in clouds of dust, charge in a seemingly uncontrolled manner towards and sometimes even through the crowd, regardless of any obstacles such as tea tents and sweet-sellers who may be in the way. It is significant that sport competitions were not only condoned by Badakhshan’s political leadership in 1998 but that they were held during such special events as the pre-Islamic festivals of nowruz and the non-religious nationalist festival of jeshen. Spectators were permitted to express their

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54 The pakol is a flat topped woollen cap with a folded/rolled lower end. The cap was possibly introduced to North West Frontier Province and Northern Areas region of India during the British colonial period. The Nuristanis in north-eastern Afghanistan also wear a similar cap. During the jihad against the Soviet-backed Communist regime, the Jamiat-e Islami under the military leadership of Ahmad Shah Massoud popularised this cap as a symbol of the mujahideen.
55 The significance of the headwear was made apparent to me when after I purchased a pakol in Faizabad, locals would walk up and comment on my affiliation with Massoud. Later, I found the wearing of a baseball cap to be more neutral.
56 I was told to ‘duck’ when a group of riders was approaching at incredible speed and was led to believe that at the right time, the riders would instinctively jump over me. Unfamiliar with this tradition, I chose instead to turn and run along with many of the other bystanders.
57 It is important to appreciate that while these festivals are either pre- or non-Islamic celebrations, they have over time incorporated Islamic elements.
enjoyment of this non-religious entertainment by physically and emotionally responding to the game with clapping, whistling and cheering. The audience became especially animated when riders approached the crowd, tackled other riders (2:35), or scored a point (3:15). The *chapandazan* also reacted emotionally to the game, yelling and screaming when having to dodge other riders or upon scoring a point. Such modes of response—clapping, screaming, whistling, and extreme emotional reactions—were forbidden by the Taliban in the territories under their control. The sanctioning in Badakhshan of these non-religious interpretants thus stood in marked contrast to the religious edicts of the Taliban who perceived this game as potentially distracting players and members of the audience from the worship of Allah. In Taliban-approved sports, only religious chants that included the Arabic phrase Allah-u Akbar (God is Great) were permitted as modes of emotional expression (see Reuters 2001).

On the last day of the festival, the last *chapandaz* to score a point in the tournament is hailed as the overall winner of the *nowruz buzkashi* tournament and is then awarded a green flag. The champion rider proudly parades through the crowd, receiving money from supporters in acknowledgment of his outstanding sporting achievement. The colour green, by convention, symbolises Islamic values such as peace and prosperity. The flag paraded by the winner is thus dynamically connected with the literal concept of ‘carrying Islam’. In this context, the green flag is a recent development, superseding the red flag that was used during the *buzkashi* tournaments of the Communist regime. It thus simultaneously stands for victory and Islamic values but also symbolises the importance of Islam in Badakhshan. In contrast, during the early Communist period under Taraki, the bright red flag linked victory to Communist ideals and the Soviet state (see Chapter Four).

With its combination of sport, game and artistry, *buzkashi* is clearly a popular recreational activity. Yet the equestrian event can also be interpreted as a

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58 In Peircean terms these expressions may be referred to through the use of emotional and energetic interpretants.
59 The numbers in the parentheses refer to the time codes (minutes:seconds) on the QuickTime movie tracks.
60 Prior to Communist and Islamic governance, the final winner would have received a *chapan* (coat) as a reward.
61 The *buzkashi* tournament concluded in the afternoon of 30 March 1998.
62 Since the exact origins of this sign are not known, it hence serves as a symbol.
63 Personal communication with Badakhshi expatriate, 2001.
means of expressing political matters, an opportunity for political rivals to display their authority and to act out their differences. A vivid metaphorical expression of "chaotic, uninhibited, and uncontrollable...competition" (Azoy 1982:3), it is valued not only as a local expression of northern Afghan cultural heritage, but as a means of acting out political allegiances and agendas. In 1998, many of the riders were patronised by commanders who were usually affiliated with a particular Islamist party active in Badakhshan. In fact, many of the competition horses are owned by landowners or military commanders who lend them to the best horsemen. However, some riders also represent and compete for a specific municipality or village.

Certainly, subtle and even overt political agendas were evident during the Nowruz celebration in Faizabad in 1998. The shift from play to politics became especially apparent when a heated dispute between two chapandazan broke out after an on-field collision. These riders were not only sportsmen, but commanders from different political groups within the United Front (Jamiat-e Islami and Hezb-e Islami). Anticipating a potentially volatile outcome to this political feud, particularly since in the past such confrontations had regularly turned into armed duels, the audience quickly left the buzkashi grounds and raced to their homes. While the chapandazan themselves were not armed, their supporters who were standing nearby in the audience, would more than likely have been carrying weapons. These potent conditions of possibility inherent in buzkashi are encapsulated by what Azoy describes as the fine line between "non-serious play and non-playful seriousness" (Azoy 1982:10).

Historically, until the advance of the Taliban and the disintegration of central government in Kabul, buzkashi was employed to serve national political agendas. Since the early twentieth century, in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, equestrian events tended to be sponsored by Pushtun provincial governors at religious or national events (Azoy 1982:86). Only on such

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64 Buzkashi's political game is brilliantly described in Azoy's monograph (1982).

65 The equestrian horses are well-groomed and cared for. The ownership of buzkashi horses is regarded by Badakhshi communities as a sign of prestige and, consequently, the price of a buzkashi horse is much higher than that of a good riding horse. The diet of a competition horse consists of an extraordinary menu – high quality barley, eggs and butter – which is of a higher standard than that of many peasants. Given the combination of political turmoil, harsh economic conditions and widespread famine, this special treatment seems quite remarkable. Prior to and in between the buzkashi season, which lasts approximately from March to September, the horses graze on nearby meadows, sometimes even on high mountain pastures, whereas in winter these competition horses are kept near the villages.
occasions as weddings or parties, was *buzkashi* patronised by regional hosts.\(^{66}\)

As early as the 1950s, national governments aimed to utilise this northern Afghan cultural practice and its attributes of bravery, strength, skill, and invincibility, to serve their own institutional and nationalistic interests in constructing an Afghan identity. Later, during the modern period of Afghanistan, the equestrian game became a popular stadium sport in Kabul on days of national and religious significance (Azoy 1982:83, 88).\(^{67}\)

The fact that both the Islamic State of Afghanistan and provincial authorities condoned *buzkashi* as a cultural practice in Badakhshan during *nowruz* in 1998, in contradistinction to the bans imposed on this performance by the Taliban, means that the entire performance can be seen as a political statement. Indeed, in the political climate of rising Islamic orthodoxy, *buzkashi* was an extremely rare event even in northern Afghanistan. In addition, extreme poverty and economic hardship made it difficult to maintain well-fed and trained *buzkashi* horses, or to find sponsorship for major tournaments in Badakhshan. Certainly, there were no confirmed reports of the continuation of *buzkashi* in Taliban regions. It seems most likely that their censorship of this cultural practice related to their interpretation of *buzkashi* as a form of non-religious entertainment and consequently as *haram* (illegitimate). Further, it is doubtful whether the Taliban militia would have been willing to support a non-Pushtun and non-Islamic cultural practice that was so potently linked to northern Afghanistan.

The *buzkashi* tournament is a traditional practice, an indexical link to Badakhshan’s cultural heritage. In the context of the prohibition of non- and pre-Islamic practices by extremist Sunni Muslims in Afghanistan – particularly the Taliban and to a lesser degree, ultra-conservative Muslims in Badakhshan – this game also manifested tensions between Afghan and Islamic identities. While *buzkashi* is a valued Afghan cultural practice, it is not particularly Islamic, although it has to a degree incorporated Islamic elements, for example, the *halal* slaughtering of the calves before and during the tournament.

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\(^{66}\) At the wedding of a wealthy family in Badakhshan, for example, a *buzkashi* tournament would usually last for a week (Personal communication with expatriate Badakhshi, April 2001).

\(^{67}\) Mohammad Daoud may be particularly credited for patronising this game during his time as Prime Minister (1953-1963), and then later as President (1973-1978) (see Azoy 1982:83). Following the Marxist coup in 1978 and throughout the Communist regime, consecutive leaders continued to sponsor *buzkashi* on national and religious occasions as an important form of Afghan cultural heritage (Azoy 1982:84).
Furthermore, the tensions expressed through *buzkashi* are also associated with ethnicity. The Taliban who were mostly Pushtun and thus did not traditionally play *buzkashi*, did not approve of the predominantly Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen game. However, their censorship of this non-Pushtun practice was legitimised through their extremist interpretation of the normative texts.

While the *buzkashi* tournament was without doubt the major attraction of the *nowruz* celebration in Faizabad, another highlight was a wrestling competition whose athletes, like the *chapandazan*, came from all districts in the province. Wrestling is a popular sport not only in Badakhshan, but throughout Afghanistan and Central Asia. The provincial government in Badakhshan during the Rabbani Presidency (1992-2001), for example, organised annual wrestling tournaments during *jeshen* as well as in the autumn. In Badakhshan, wrestling games, known as *kushti giri*, are performed during the spring and summer months and at dusk throughout the province small groups of men and boys would frequently gather at public outdoor spaces for practice matches.

A wrestling contest was held on the second last day of the *nowruz* festival. The two wrestlers were dressed in a short *chapan* (a martial art-like cotton shirt), a *shawalak* (woollen trousers) and a *futa* (a long belt), which strongly resembled a judo outfit and which revealed parts of their bare chests, arms and legs. The rules of this ancient sport demand the display of strength through the overpowering of an opponent by holding him at his *futa* and throwing him to the ground so that he lands on his shoulders. Since there seem to be no edicts against this sport in Islam’s authoritative texts, wrestling is generally condoned under Islamic law. In theory, therefore, it was not explicitly banned in Taliban-controlled areas. Nevertheless, in order to participate in any of the sporting activities periodically condoned by the Taliban, athletes were required to interrupt their games during official prayer times and to adhere to the Taliban’s

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68 Private as well as government wrestling clubs existed in Kabul during, and probably before, the Rabbani years.
69 *Kushti giri* is a common Persian noun for wrestling. This term is also used in Iran and Kabul and is derived from the verb *kushti geraftan* (to wrestle). In Badakhshan, the term *qustin* was also used to describe the recreational practice of wrestling.
70 A *futa* is a five metre long belt that is tied around the waist of the wrestler and holds his shirt together.
71 Under the Taliban, the practice of sport was ambiguous and authorities often vacillated as to its legality. Hence, sporting events were sometimes permitted, only to be censored again at any time and without any warning (see Baiy 2001). These quixotic policies were monitored and enforced by the militia’s Religious Police, the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice.
austere idea of Islamic deportment which demanded that all limbs remained covered at all times, that a skullcap be worn and that men grow a beard at least three finger widths long (see AP 2000).\textsuperscript{72} In spite of the Taliban’s strict policies on sport, it is interesting to note that cricket, a truly British and non-Islamic game, was encouraged by ‘friendly’ military advisers from cricket-obsessed Pakistan, possibly to break the isolation of the Taliban which had resulted from the sanctions imposed by the United States and United Nations. In this case, Taliban authorities were able to make an exception to their strict dress code and accepted cricket’s standard costume (BBC 2001).\textsuperscript{73}

As can be seen from the accompanying movie clip, the conditions of deportment were much less stringent in Badakhshan during the nowruz festival in 1998. It is interesting to note also that the pahlawan (wrestling champion) is treated in a very similar fashion to a chapandaz [\textit{view movie clip wrestling.mov}; CD ROM 1]. The wrestling competition also has a complex historical background. This sport was mentioned in Ferdowsi’s Persian epic \textit{Shahnama} and is related to both pre-Islamic and Persian Islamic cultural heritage. The pahlawan (victor in this physical contest) is sometimes associated either explicitly or implicitly with the ancient Persian hero Rustam.\textsuperscript{74} In terms of a conscious association, the wrestling champion thereby

\textsuperscript{72} Sports such as wrestling, that were believed to have been practised during Mohammad’s time, were generally favoured, but some modern games such as volleyball, soccer, tae-kwando, and cricket were progressively tolerated by moderate factions within the Taliban (see Clark 2000). Boxing, for example, was thought by Taliban authorities to have the potential to cause head injuries and consequently was banned on the grounds that it was an un-Islamic sport. A more likely reason for this prohibition, however, was the international boxing association’s ‘un-Islamic’ dress requirement, which demanded that athletes wear shorts and a singlet, thus exposing forbidden parts of their bodies (see AFP 2000a). For this reason, Afghan boxers were banned from competing in Pakistan in 1998 and they were suspended by the International Olympic Committee in the same year (see BBC 2000). Not surprisingly, particularly given their uncompromising prohibition of women’s participation in sport, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was not allowed to participate at the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

\textsuperscript{73} In the Taliban’s appropriation of cricket, the sporting outfit completely covered the players’ limbs. This decision was testimony to the Taliban’s ideological inconsistency with respect to bodily practices and further added to the ambivalence with which they were viewed. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s first cricket team consisted entirely of ethnic Pushuns whose first international match took place in and against Pakistan in May 2001 (see McCarthy 2001), a fact which confirms Pakistan as one of the Taliban militia’s main political allies. In a perhaps macabre twist to their new found love of this British colonial sport, a team of Afghan cricketers competed in Pakistan in October 2001 while the home towns of the players were being bombed by US planes (see AFP 2001).

\textsuperscript{74} The legendary pahlawan, wrestling champion, in Ferdowsi’s eleventh century epic poem (1990 (1967):76-77) is called Rustam – a hero who constantly saved his country from evil forces:
enters into a “direct and existential connection” with this mythical figure (Zeman 1977:37). At the same time, the pahlawan is also an index of his local community and ethnic identity. As with the buzkashi tournament, the excitement of the members of the audience was expressed physically through clapping and waving. After the wrestling match, the winner was celebrated as if, like Rustam, he had just defeated an enemy in battle. The pahlawan’s supporters and fellow villagers kissed and hugged him, forms of intimacy that in other social contexts in Afghanistan, would be regarded as uncharacteristic behaviour among adult men. And like the chapandaz, the pahlawan also received monetary gifts that signified the prestige of victory.

In comparison with buzkashi, however, the rules of the wrestling competition in Faizabad in 1998 were much simpler, the duration of the contests much briefer, and the overall structure of this game appeared to be less chaotic. The posture of the competitors was characterised by a wide body stance which provided them with maximum support and stability while their trunks were mostly fixed in a forwardly inclined position. Their main actions were directed in a sagittal plane, but they periodically also moved strongly from side-to-side. A contestant’s strategic changes in body height were used in a ‘shaping’ fashion so as not to allow his opponent to maintain his own posture. The arms of the wrestlers were mainly involved in holding onto an opponent’s belt and costume, and a combination of ‘sustained’ and ‘sudden’ movements, such as pushes and pulls, were performed whilst occasionally twisting the trunks, to surprise an opponent or to throw him off balance. The prime body actions thus consisted of ‘spoke-like directional’ and some rotational movements (0:31); contestants pushed their weight forwards in a sagittal direction against each other, thereby creating an oppositional effect. These effort qualities markedly contrasted those of the dancers that will be discussed in later sections of this chapter as well as in Chapter Seven.

The virtues and strengths of the Badakhshi people including their determination to remain firmly grounded in a moderate Islamic and, at that time, anti-Taliban society, are expressed in these sport practices. A wrestling contest, even more so than a buzkashi tournament, has the potential to

[Rustam:] Our custom is not this, and our law demands a different practice. When a man engages in a wrestling contest and thrusts his older opponent’s head into the dust, he does not on first pressing his back down on to the ground cut off his head, even to exact vengeance. If he brings him down a second time, he receives the title of ‘Lion’ for his prowess, and it is then lawful for him to sever the head from the body. Such is our custom.
iconically represent virtually any adversarial struggle, such as between two villages, two political parties, or two religious factions, in terms of conflict and ultimate victory. Indeed, one may speculate that the popularity of the highly competitive sports of wrestling and *buzkashi* in Badakhshan may be at least in part related to the ubiquity of warfare in Afghanistan.  

Public Aesthetic Performances

This discussion of cultural practices has thus far concentrated on performances of a religious nature and those of sports contests which occurred during major non-religious festivals. While the recreational events of *buzkashi* and wrestling and amusement activities such as those associated with the *nowruz* festival were not frequently evident in Badakhshan during the period of my research, they were nevertheless practised publicly and without censorship by the Islamic State of Afghanistan, the provincial administration or local authorities. All of these cultural practices remained relatively unrestricted and unaffected by Afghanistan’s ‘Talibanisation’. In comparison, the performance of aesthetic practices was contingent upon the attitudes of local military commanders whose conservative or even extremist interpretations of Sharia law tended to be asserted by the public presence of armed soldiers in the urban areas of Faizabad, Dasht-e Islam and Bagh-e Zard. This military presence effectively served to reinforce the tacit prohibition of non-religious aesthetic entertainment. Moreover, the assassinations of well-known Badakhshi musicians such as Faiz-e Mangal by mujahideen were still current topics of conversation in 1998 and 1999.  

As a consequence, music was very rarely publicly performed in geo-strategic areas that were under the control of Sunni Badakhshi Tajik, Uzbek and Baluch military commanders who were aligned with the Jamiat-e Islami or Hezb-e Islami. Instead, as will be described in Chapter Seven, the infrequent performance of music arose mostly in the

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75 Accordingly, one possible interpretation of Ferdowsi’s passage mentioned above in footnote 74 may be that the holding of the head of a wrestling opponent to the ground may equal a metaphorical death (cf. Lewis 1992:2, 167-168). The adjective ‘metaphorical’ is understood here in a Peircean context, that is as an iconic/indexical relation in language. In the example of a verbal play in Brazilian capoeira, Lewis (1992:167-168) describes another embodied practice that may express a metaphorical death through a “killing intent”.  

76 Like Bazgul Badakhshi, the musician Faiz-e Mangal from central Badakhshan had come to prominence with the establishment of national television during the Taraki regime from 1978. He was killed by mujahideen as his repertoire of songs was interpreted as being influenced by Communist ideology.
security of the private domain and accordingly these practices became clandestine or 'underground' in nature.

The accounts and analyses of a limited number of aesthetic practices that were publicly performed in Badakhshan during this period of cultural upheaval and which were largely perceived by the province's conservative Islamist authorities to be controversial if not illegitimate, thus complement the preceding discussion of public religious and sport practices. Chapter Seven will specifically address aesthetic performances which arose in semi-public and private domains.

Unlike towns in neighbouring Central and South Asian countries where music is an essential part of the background soundscape, arising either via the live performance of musicians or, at the very least, from a tape recorder or radio, Badakshi bazaars, tea-houses and residences were devoid of music during the time of my field research. Although small battery-operated transistor radios existed in most settlements, their use was rationed, in part due to a shortage of batteries both in terms of quality and quantity, and consequently, they served the sole purpose of providing national and international Pushto and Dari news broadcasts.

**Flute Music during nowruz**

The public celebrations of Faizabad's 1998 *nowruz* festival did not include any official public or even private programs of aesthetic performances. This contrasted with their inclusion in the *nowruz* celebrations of neighbouring Persian-speaking countries such as Iran or Tajikistan. On *joma* of that festive week, however, I noticed an amateur musician in a scenic spot near a popular walking path. Hamid, a Pushtun Badakhshi from Darwish Deh, one of the surrounding villages of Faizabad, was sitting on a grassy patch next to a fruit orchard, with the Kokcha River at his back, and was entertaining an attentive friend by playing tunes on his flute. Although in a slightly secluded public space that was relatively removed from any residences, the two young men

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77 Hamid's family was forcefully relocated to Badakhshan from southern Afghanistan during the reign of *Amir* Abdur Rahman Khan at the end of the nineteenth century. Like many other ethnic Pushtuns living in Badakhshan, Hamid does not know his family's Pushto language, but speaks in the local Badakhshi Dari dialect.
could be seen by passing pedestrians and soldiers. Indeed, promenading along the Kokcha River is a popular leisure activity for groups of male friends especially during holidays. The sounds of the rapidly flowing river however, effectively dampened the sound of the flute so that it could not be easily heard from the main walking path. Yet, whether it was unheard or benignly tolerated, this relatively public performance of music did not provoke a response among Faizabad’s generally conservative population or even from the United Front soldiers. To some degree, this may be attributable to the semi-public/semi-private location of the flute performance, but it seems also that the musician’s unobtrusive playing was generally perceived to be a harmless or innocent aesthetic activity. Certainly, in a more public space such as in front of a mosque, the performance would have been undoubtedly regarded as unseemly and quite possibly would have led to a direct confrontation with religious and/or military authorities.

In other regions of Badakhshan, I also regularly observed boys and shepherds playing on homemade flutes. The continuation of this aesthetic practice highlights some of the inherent tensions in Badakhshan society, namely that a continuum of ‘appropriate’ aesthetic actions exists wherein some instruments are categorised as more legitimate than others. Although music was generally not encouraged in Badakhshan during the Taliban era, instrumental flute music seemed, to a degree, to be permissible. Why the performance of other instruments was opposed more vehemently is not entirely clear, but it may relate to the fact that lutes and drums were commonly used during the monarchic period at the court or during secular entertainment patronised by elite families.

The amateur musician Hamid performed on a *tula*, a horizontal six-holed metal flute, on a whole scale of eight notes. This is a popular instrument throughout Badakhshan, although the vertically held wooden flutes are probably more common. Many young boys are given crude homemade *tulas* as presents during the *nowruz* and *id* festivals. Young shepherds traditionally play them during their lengthy stays on *ailags* (mountain pastures) and when droving flocks through passing villages. Local tunes, including the popular folk genre of *falak* (local genre of folk song), are the most common forms of music

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78 *Tula* is a Dari term for a wooden, vertically-held flute with six frontal finger holes and one dorsal thumb hole.
79 The *falak* may be understood as a reflection of the environment in which the tune or song originates (see Shahrani 1973:68). This genre is especially common in Badakhshan and is
performed on the Badakhshi tula. Hamid also performed loose interpretations of popular folk/pop songs from the 1970s, such as those of the now legendary Ahmad Zahir.\(^{80}\) The example I have chosen is a *falak* [view track localtune.mov; CD ROM 1].\(^{81}\)

Hamid’s performance created an evocative ambience.\(^{82}\) When I asked him what the song meant to him, he explained that “this music makes me think of the people I love”. It seems then that the tune brought Hamid into “immediate contact with the song’s objects” (Zeman 1977:32) and generated feelings of love and longing. Hamid’s experiential feeling thus corresponds to Peirce’s emotional interpretant (see Turino 1999:224) and may also be understood in terms of a ‘First’, that is a “fundamental…phenomenal state more basic than thinking” (Lewis 1995:236). The immediacy of the connection between Hamid’s emotions and his musical rendition is clearly reflected in his attempts to articulate his feelings by using the word ‘love’, which in this context seems to have implied unrequited love. Hamid’s statement of longing for “the people I love” touched on some controversial issues. As a consequence of Afghanistan’s strict gender separation, which is enforced at all levels of society, it is extremely difficult for unmarried youths or even adults to meet members of the opposite sex. Nightly curfews during the political crisis had even made it difficult for friends of the same sex to get together.

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\(^{80}\) Ahmad Zahir, the son of the former Prime Minister Abdul Zahir (1971-1972), was Afghanistan’s most popular singer, integrating traditional Afghan, classical Indian, Western classical, and modern Western musical genres. He was mysteriously killed in 1979 in an allegedly politically motivated assassination (Madadi and Baily 2001) under the early Communist regime of Hafizullah Amin. Since the defeat of the Communist government, Ahmad Zahir has become almost a cult figure, idolised by many Afghans, especially young people.

\(^{81}\) With the exception of “Rawan”, I created the titles of the movie clips based on the responses I received from the performers when asked the titles of particular pieces they performed. Usually the musicians responded in terms of the genre (*ghazal*, *rubai*, *qasida*, *falak*, Kataghani, etc.) or by mentioning a phrase or word from the song’s lyrics.

\(^{82}\) One of the central characteristics was the use of an eight note scale which was performed in tetrachords. Using brief pauses, Hamid repeated the song’s main melody, which was performed several times clearly and in an articulated fashion, although a relatively abrupt halt was evident at the end of a musical phrase.
Music at jeshe in Buz Dara

While the buzkashi during Faizabad’s nowruz celebration had been exciting and captivating entertainment and gave the impression of an important state function, a month later, in April 1998, in Buz Dara, a small town in an Ismaili-inhabited region of north-eastern Badakhshan, I witnessed a second, much smaller equestrian tournament. This occurred during jeshen, a public outdoor festival commemorating the defeat of the Communist regime and the beginning of Islamic governance. Significantly, at the commencement of this festival, I attended a public music performance. This was one of two public music performances I observed during my entire field research.

Jeshen was originally introduced as Afghanistan’s Independence Day on 18 August 1919 by King Amanullah to celebrate the securing of independence from Britain following the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Since then, the date of this festival has shifted in accordance with the interpretation of independence by successive governments. During the Communist period, for example, jeshen was celebrated on 27 April to mark the overthrow of the Republic in 1978. With the defeat of this regime, however, jeshen was moved by one day to 28 April. In spite of this date switching, from the time of its inauguration until the collapse of Communist governance, jeshen was traditionally marked by days of public music and dance performances as well as buzkashi in many districts of northern Afghanistan and in Kabul. During Afghanistan’s modernising period from the 1950s onwards, jeshen was characterised by an atmosphere of entertainment and included amusement fairs. It was common for people to listen to music and to dance the atan (see Klimburg 1966:161). The following passages from the first-hand accounts of the German diplomat Kurt Ziemke (1939:284-285) who described jeshen in Kabul in the 1930s, provide insights into the liberal attitudes towards performance activities that prevailed.

83 On this day, the British army was defeated for the third time.
84 In 2002, the Transitional Authority of President Hamid Karzai again celebrated jeshen on 18 August, thereby marking its eighty-third anniversary.
85 The atan is a traditional Pushtun group dance, accompanied by the atan tune performed by one to two musicians playing the dohol (a double-headed barrel-shaped frame drum) and the surnai (a double-reed wind instrument). This group dance was originally performed as a war dance by some Pushtun tribes (see Klimburg 1966:119). Due to its popularity and sponsorship during national and private events and its popularity as a trans-ethnic Afghan dance, the atan has been elevated to a national dance, the atan-e meli. Examples of the atan performances in Badakhshan will be discussed in Chapter Seven.
Public Performances in Badakhshan

during the monarchic reign of Zahir Shah and which persisted during the subsequent presidency of Daoud.86

It is a genuine people’s celebration, where everyone is not only reminded of the historical significance [of jeshen] but also encouraged to celebrate and to have fun. The government offices remain closed for one week and every Afghan has time off work during this period.

Stalls are set up on the festival grounds and there is an atmosphere of a fair. People rush to Kabul from afar, the neighbourhoods and the rural areas. The amusement activities of the people who can afford them are harmless, their enjoyment is modest; there is a lack of noise, rejoicing, spirits [geistige Getränke] are proscribed, a search for female dancers is futile. Amusement stalls entice with cheap prices; in front of the kebab stalls customers are squatting on their heels while listening to monotonous music, a simple merry-go-round is squeaking, clairvoyants, storytellers and magicians are attracting circles of onlookers, humorous fellows in costumes caricature citizens of European nations. I saw one [comedian] imitating a drunk European who, as a result, received roaring laughter for his comical and realistic performance. Bears are dancing, fruit lemonades in the most dazzling colours are on offer, as are pistachios, almonds, nuts and sweets. At dusk, colourful garlands with electrical bulbs illuminate the stalls section of the grounds; fireworks are on display. Many peasants from the rural and mountainous regions encountered many new experiences.

It is a festival for men, and at dusk veiled women with their chadors vanish to their homes. During the day, they [women] are however allowed to watch the stick dancers and wrestlers...It is worth noting that religion has very little to do with this festival, it is a genuine national celebration, an entertaining festival for the people.

He later describes the music of two military ensembles and the performance of several dances (Ziemke 1939:289):87

In the afternoon, we observe rural dances from different tribes from our podium. Naturally, only men perform these dances. Ghilzais, Mangals as well as Nuristanis (Kafirs)88 were performing. The Ghilzais...follow the rhythm of an oblong drum, and subsequently toss their long black hair; they form into circles, move into lines, they dance battle and war. The dance movements of the Mangals...were occasionally abrupt and their circles wilder. Quite in contrast [to these movements], the [dances of the] Kafirs differed; they danced as a circle around a flautist and a drummer who were playing in the circle...They [the Kafirs] did not gyrate in a wild fashion and they also kept their heads still. They indicated the beat with their hands. This is perhaps how peasants dance at a harvest festival.

The biggest attraction, however, was a buzkashi tournament with three thousand riders (Ziemke 1939:291).

Other European researchers have provided similar accounts of jeshen and confirmed the historical occurrence of artistic performances during this

86 The following passages by Ziemke have been translated by this author from German into English.
87 Military music in Afghanistan was strongly influenced by Turkish military music.
88 See Chapter Three, footnote 56, for information on Nuristanis and Kafirs.
Chapter Six

festival. In the 1970s, Karl Gratzl and Roger Senarclens de Grancy (1973:65, 66), as well as Mark Slobin and Lorraine Sakata described the occurrence of music and dance performances in Badakhshan during *jeshen* which at that time was celebrated in August (Slobin 1976:40). Slobin comments that 

[d]uring *jeshen*, the best performers...flock to Faizabad, and the public at large takes over the town in a manner reminiscent of Mazar crowds for Nowruz, though on a much smaller scale...It is the one time in the year when Badaxšanis from different regions meet for entertainment and business in the centre en masse, and Faizabad is ready for this friendly invasion. The provincial officials clear a large space near the center of town as a parade ground and exhibition area, and the word goes out to sub-governors to collar all the available talent in their regions for entertainment (1976:150).

Sakata confirms that *jeshen* in Badakhshan was

the only time of the year when there is any semblance of public entertainment in Faizabad. Parades, musical performances, and exhibitions are held in the *khībān* [main street] or in the schools (1983:27).

The nature of *jeshen* celebrations inevitably reflected the ideological nature of governance. During the Communist period, a military and national emphasis was evident in the festivities. *Jeshen* began with a military parade on a ground near Faizabad’s military headquarters at the *maidan-e askari* and included a display of local handicrafts as well as a lottery. Kabul’s military parade was also simulcast on radio and broadcast via amplifiers in Faizabad and while *buzkashi* tournaments were generally not held, each province would send a volleyball team to the *jeshen* tournament in Kabul. Under the early Rabbani government, sporting activities, especially gymnastics, and a military parade continued to crown the *jeshen* celebrations, but aesthetic performances were not on the agenda. The year 2000, representing Afghanistan’s 81st Independence Day anniversary, was the first time that the Taliban acknowledged the event in areas under their control (see AFP 2000b), but since all recreational and aesthetic activities remained prohibited, *jeshen* was celebrated in Kabul with a military parade but without the accompaniment of military music ensembles.

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89 Karl Gratzl and Roger Senarclens de Grancy conducted their research in the early 1970s, whereas Mark Slobin conducted his in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
90 The lottery was not a local tradition; it was introduced to Badakhshan from Kabul (Personal communication with Badakhshi expatriate, 2001).
91 Written communication from Dr Najibullah Lafraie, March 2001.
92 In 2001, the Taliban held a similar *jeshen* celebration.
In 1998 in Buz Dara, although the *jeshen* celebrations were nothing like the historical events described by Kurt Ziemke (1939), *buzkashi* was sanctioned by local Ismaili and Sunni authorities and was clearly the main public event. The festival began with the rehearsal by high school boys of a patriotic song about Afghanistan, which was conducted in the presence of the school’s administrative staff. This song was not unlike a *tarana* (a nationalistic song) and eulogised the achievements of the *mujahideen* and the Rabbani government. Hence, it was clearly distinguishable from the only versions of *taranas* condoned by the Taliban which were either purely religious in nature or referred to the triumphs of the militia [view track anthem.mov; CD ROM 3].

*Anthem*

Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
The land which is the creator of man.
Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
You are the symbol of the reawakening of religion.

Your region is tulip-coloured all year round.
All of your deserts are filled with blood red colour.
All the country’s children are your property.
Your *kafir* [unbeliever] enemy is humbled by you and your descendents.

Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
The land which is the creator of man.
Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
You are the symbol of the reawakening of religion.

Here, religion is deeply entrenched in the barracks of God.
There is no place for enslaved men.

Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
The land which is the creator of man.
Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
You are the symbol of the reawakening of religion.

Those people who have given their souls and hearts to your love,
will devote their lives in the way of your high manner.

Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
The land which is the creator of man.
Oh homeland! Oh homeland!

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93 In this region, a *buzkashi* tournament may last from three to seven days. In addition to *jeshen*, other occasions such as *nowruz*, the end of autumn and wedding celebrations may lead to *buzkashi* performances. It is interesting to note that the ploughing season immediately followed the *jeshen buzkashi* tournament in this high mountain region. The ground’s soil was noticeably loosened after the game.

94 A *tarana* is a nationalistic, patriotic song.
You are the symbol of the reawakening of religion.

Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
The land which is the creator of man.
Oh homeland! Oh homeland!
You are the symbol of the reawakening of religion.

The use of a choir leader and a responding chorus in this performance might be seen to function iconically as a sign of political leadership and popular unity (cf. Lewis 1992:162).95 Musically, the melodies of the ‘call and responses’ differed slightly, but the simple and repetitive lyrics and melodies allowed the school boys to respond strongly and confidently; the texts could be easily remembered and vocalised, thereby creating a powerful sense of solidarity.96 The teachers reacted to this song with solemn expressions and stiff postures. It is likely that the regnant symbols of watan (homeland) and mazhab (religion) evoked nostalgic memories of times when the Afghan regime was unified, stable and well-functioning. The word lala (tulip), for example, is typically associated with the historical image of Afghanistan as a beautiful and fertile land. The tulip referred to in this song is a distinct species of red tulip which grows wild in the trans-Oxus region of Central Asia and is particularly famous in Afghanistan for its blooms in Mazar-e Sharif, around the period of nowruz which coincides with the beginning of spring. Symbolically, particularly among Twelver Shiite Muslims, the red tulip also represents love, renewal and beauty, and as far back as the thirteenth century, it was celebrated by Persian poets such as Saadi and Hafez who described imaginary gardens of tulips and fragrant roses.97 In Persian poetry, the wild tulip is also associated with a youth who has died prematurely. Indeed, since the Iranian Revolution and the jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviet-backed Communist government, the tulip has come to be a metaphor for martyrdom (see Centlivres 1988:58).

The exact origin of the words, melody and structure of this song is unclear. Furthermore, it seems likely that this song was slightly modified in the context of jeshen, Afghanistan’s Independence Day, to suit the ideology of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and as a consequence, it was thematically reflective of Afghanistan’s national anthem. This version of the tarana genre may be

95 According to Lewis (1992), song texts may offer semiotic possibilities, “especially in the more direct fields of semantic and pragmatic meaning. Here continuities between the game and society at large can be made explicit...any aspect of culture the players choose to comment on” (1992:162).
96 Not surprisingly, these features are common to many nationalistic songs.
97 Saadi, for example, mentions the tulip in his Gulistan (1988).
understood to convey the idea of Afghanistan as a sovereign nation. Moreover, the chant may be interpreted as an object of direct experience (a rhematic index) that functions as a sign of "possibility and imagination" (Turino 1999:245), its performance reflecting a hypothetical and imagined political situation. Hence, through the performance of this song, the school's administration was perhaps attempting to foster an image of a safe, forward-looking and heterogenous Islamic state under the leadership of President Burhanuddin Rabbani. For the schoolboys, the performance of this nationalistic chant also served to mark a school holiday and the opportunity to watch an exciting buzkashi tournament, a rare form of entertainment during that period in Badakhshan.

After this rehearsal, the boys paraded from the school via the tiny bazaar to the buzkashi ground, chanting as they marched. Until the rise of the Taliban, such a public performance of patriotic songs was a common feature of national festivities during all Afghan regimes, the nationalistic sentiments of the lyrics reflecting the official ideology of the time. Yet for the most part, the Taliban banned taranas and even madahs (praise songs to Allah and the Prophet), permitting only the performance of the azan (call to prayer), qiraah (Quranic recitations) and, as Baily notes, "‘chants’, which are panegyrics to Taliban principles and commemorations of those who have died on the field of battle for the Taliban cause" (2001:7). Certainly, the Buz Dara tarana would have been prohibited by the Taliban for two reasons – the references to the Rabbani government and the performance by predominantly Ismaili children. The Taliban’s notorious relationship with non-Sunni groups was borne out in their massacres of Shiite Hazaras in Mazar-e Sharif and in Bamiyan.

After the parade of the local school boys, the equestrian tournament officially began on the outskirts of Buz Dara. Since jeshen was a public holiday, the stalls of the bazaar were closed and the entire male population of the wider region, including the district’s Sunni and Ismaili religious and military authorities, gathered at the buzkashi field. In contrast to the events of the nowruz buzkashi tournament in Faizabad, this equestrian event was accompanied by the performance of a local musician. The Ismaili Ahmad Ali, who was not aligned with any of the major political parties, was one of the most popular musicians in the region and well-known throughout Badakhshan and neighbouring Dari-speaking regions of northern Afghanistan. During the Communist regime, Ahmad Ali had been a nationally renowned singer and leader of a music ensemble who, having attained prestigious status as a consequence of the recording of his songs by Kabul Television, had travelled
frequently to provincial capitals and earned a reasonable income from his performances. However, with the denouncement of music by Islamist authorities from 1992, his performing career, like that of all artists across Afghanistan, came to an abrupt halt and he was forced to eke out an existence as a subsistence farmer. In 1998, Ahmad Ali’s previous status as an acclaimed musician during the Communist period meant that he was generally stigmatised by the Sunni Badakhshi elite.

Ahmad Ali’s music combines regional, trans-ethnic and Central Asian cultural elements and is firmly cemented in the culture of Northern Afghanistan. Reflecting the historical tradition in which musical knowledge was handed down through a lineage of performers, he was initially taught by his father. Later, he became influenced by an older generation of well-known Badakhshi musicians (Bazgul Badakhshi and Dur Mohammad Keshmi) who performed regularly in teahouses, at festivals, weddings, nowruz celebrations, the birth of a son, or on holy days. In Buz Dara, Ahmad Ali initially performed on a harmonium\(^{98}\) and later on his main instrument, the *dambura*, a long-necked, unfretted plucked lute with two nylon strings. Soon after his solo performances, he played in an ensemble with two local musicians, Hasan who played the *daf*, a frame drum resembling a tambourine that is often ornamented with small cymbals or jingling discs, and Karim Beg who played the *ghichak*, an unfretted and bowed spiked fiddle with two metal strings.\(^ {99}\)

In light of the general disapproval of musical entertainment by influential Sunni United Front commanders, it was remarkable that Habib Shah, an influential leader of the local Ismaili community, was successful in gaining permission from Buz Dara’s Sunni political and military authorities to organise Ahmad Ali’s performance at this public commemorative event. As briefly mentioned in the description of the genre of Ismaili religious music, Habib Shah’s political position stems from his role as a district *wakil*, that is a community-elected delegate who represents Badakhshan at a national level such as at a *Loya Jirga*, in addition to being a *zaminadar* (landowner), as well as a staunch ally of Massoud’s *shura-e nazar*. Not only was Habib Shah’s own

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\(^{98}\) The harmonium, referred to in Afghanistan as *armonia*, is a free-reed aerophone with a bellow-operated keyboard. This originally British instrument was introduced to Afghanistan during the British colonial period in the Subcontinent, possibly during the reign of Amanullah in the 1920s (see Baily 1988:27). It is especially popular in Radio Afghanistan-influenced urban music, but also in the performances of Hindustani classical music as well as Qawwali (religious Sufi music) and Sikh religious music.

\(^ {99}\) Both the *dambura* and the *ghichak* are usually tuned to an interval of a fourth.
patronage of music exceptional, but the condoning of this public entertainment program testified to the more moderate Islamic views of the Sunni leadership in this region.\textsuperscript{100} According to local informants, however, a public music performance had not occurred in Buz Dara since the collapse of the Communist regime in 1992. While the Ismailis tended to place a greater emphasis on aesthetic practices, public performances were restricted in this region largely as a result of the political administration of Badakhshi Sunnis who are a minority in this predominantly Ismaili territory. This outdoor performance six years later may thus be regarded as an exceptional occurrence in Badakhshan, and furthermore, as extremely unlikely elsewhere in Afghanistan.

All members of the elite of the Buz Dara region attended the \textit{buzkashi} tournament: the district’s Sunni Tajik governor, the mullah, several local Sunni and Ismaili commanders, who were all aligned with Massoud’s \textit{shura-e nazar}, some Sunni Pushhton, Uzbek, and Tajik Afghan engineers from other Afghan provinces who were employed by international NGOs and who were mostly secularly-educated, as well as regional and local Ismaili leaders consisting of \textit{wakils} and the Shah of the Ismailis.\textsuperscript{101} These members of the local elite were seated on the margins of the \textit{buzkashi} field near, but not in direct view of the musician. The rarity of public entertainment in Badakhshan meant that Ahmad Ali’s renditions were greatly appreciated by the local male spectators who encircled the performers and listened attentively. Many members of the audience were armed with long wooden sticks to fend off competing riders and their horses. Others, local soldiers of the district’s United Front-aligned military commander, carried Kalashnikov AK 47 machine guns over their shoulders. Whereas the sticks were used solely for the purpose of the \textit{buzkashi} game, the weapons also served as indices of the civil war still smouldering at the time. Ironically, the Soviet-made Kalashnikov rifles were once signs of the mujahideen’s \textit{jihad} against the Soviet-backed government. During the time of the performance, the weapons were indices of the uncertain political landscape, which demanded that troops be continuously on alert to thwart any advances by the Taliban or renegade local commanders.

\textsuperscript{100} It is interesting to note that many of the Sunni Badakhshi elite in the Buz Dara region who were acting as government officials or commanders were descendents of \textit{mir} families who, traditionally, have been in powerful political positions (see Chapter Four).

\textsuperscript{101} Badakhshan’s Ismaili communities are overseen by three Shahs. These religious leaders are \textit{zamin-e shahi} (landowners), as well as administrators of \textit{awqaf} (religious endowments) and \textit{zamin-e sakari} (land belonging to the Aga Khan) (see Holzwarth 1980:202). In this case, the Shah was the regional Ismaili leader whose sphere of influence included the greater Buz Dara region.
Ahmad Ali sang a range of folk songs from the local area and other Afghan provinces, including *Falaks*, *ghazals* (a form of love poetry) and *rubais* (quatrain) whose lyrics were characterised by sad, comical and romantic themes and, at times, even sexual allusions.\(^2\) I will discuss three songs from his solo music performance at Buz Dara. The first song “Advice” is a *ghazal* about the virtues of friendship. The performance of this *ghazal* indexically signified an association with traditional Badakhshi and local cultural heritage since the performance invoked past experiences of similar aesthetic events which were no longer permitted by orthodox authorities in Badakhshan [view song advice.mov; CD ROM 1].

_*Advice*  
_[matla]_[\(^3\)]

Don’t keep company with bad people  
I’m scared that you may also adopt bad manners.

*Fard:* The freshness of the garden and flowers and the rosy cheeks have gone.  
Loyalty, love and kindness have disappeared from the friends.

Don’t declaim your friends in front of those you don’t know.  
Instead of mentioning the shortcomings of others,  
ask others about your own shortcomings so as to correct your mistakes.

One day your enemy may be your guest.  
Everything that you have – give to him, don’t tell him any lies.

Don’t declaim your friends in front of those you don’t know.  
Instead of mentioning the shortcomings of others,  
ask others about your own shortcomings so as to correct your mistakes.

A time will come in which you are able to maintain friendships,  
So you should appreciate this present time and not destroy the garden of flowers  
when I appear with a flood of tears; don’t humble me in front of my friends.

Respect your real friends and don’t accompany bad friends.  
Don’t break relationships with your loyal friends.

Don’t declaim your friends in front of those you don’t know.  
Instead of mentioning the shortcomings of others,  
ask others about your own shortcomings so as to correct your mistakes.

It will bring happiness if you bow in front of friends and Ayyubi.  
Don’t bow in front of a person with weaknesses.

Don’t declaim your friends in front of those you don’t know.

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\(^2\) A *rubai* is also a style of love poetry, consisting of four hemistichs or half lines (Sakata 1983:54). In Afghanistan, this style is also referred to as *chahar baiti*.

\(^3\) A *matla* is an Arabic term for the opening distich of a poem, such as a *ghazal* or a *qasida* (see Neghat and Burhan 1993:683).
Instead of mentioning the shortcomings of others, ask others about your own shortcomings so as to correct your mistakes.

For many listeners, words such as *gulshan* (literally, a ‘place of flowers’) and *gulha* (flowers) would have evoked the tradition of Sufi poetry and ideas like the renewal of life, beauty, the expression of love, a beloved (in a metaphorical sense), and the spiritual world. The musical characteristics of Ahmad Ali’s pitch, scale, timbre and rhythm, further functioned to convey a range of similar feelings.\(^{104}\)

The second piece, entitled “Mahmud and the Donkey”, was an ostensibly humorous folk song about a donkey and his master. As can be seen in the movie clip, the song provides a lot of amusement for the audience whose enthusiasm confirms their valuation of such artistic performances [view song donkey.mov; CD ROM 1].

_Mahmud and the Donkey_

Everyone was untouched by the mishaps of the world except Mahmud and his donkey. Mahmud and his belongings were left in the hands of fate and destiny, the negative aspects of the world befell only them.

The poor jenny had only a little barley to eat, since she was always forced to consume poor quality grass near the sewage drain.

The she-ass was so blind and devoid of any hair that she could not run.

Moreover she did not have a new saddlecloth and only a poor quality saddle bag.

Listen, she gave birth to a foal last week!

[Translator’s note: At this point everybody in the audience is laughing].

I’ll come straight to the point: Mahmud and the donkey came together. Mahmud hit the donkey’s head and said: “Quickly stand up.”

The she-ass responded: “Oh man! You oppress me like the cruel Nimrod oppressed Moses! My back, chest and waist are tired and worn.”

While trying to get up from the ground, she suddenly fell back to the ground.

\(^{104}\) Ahmad Ali performed the song within one octave and used the notes A and E, both as the pitch centres and drone notes. Moreover, this song was characterised by his application of short rhythmic phrases within the main melody. One of Ahmad Ali’s particular playing techniques consisted of his strumming style on the _dambura_. The downward and upward strumming with four fingers of his right hand was almost reminiscent of the strumming style of Spanish flamenco music, known as _rasqueado_. I do not, however, claim that there are any links between these two styles.
Her legs collapsed and the jenny was unable to stand. Mahmud got angry and fetched a stone and hit her with his arms. Finally, he hit the she-ass’s head with another stone and with that blow finished her off.

Mahmud felt sorry for his cruel action. He was upset and held his head low.

The scene was confusing: All that was left, was the donkey’s harness, saddle cloth and saddle. The poor jenny was on its last breath. When Mahmud looked around, he cried and yelled like a donkey himself!

([Ahmad Ali:] Now the donkey complains!) “All my life I did not see a new saddle bag. With the exception of the grass near the sewer’s canal,

I was not offered any onions from you. With the exception of cool water, I did not get to taste any sweet drinks.” When Mahmud heard the jenny’s complaints, he felt distressed.

([Ahmad Ali:] Now Mahmud is going to report the incident to his father). He told his father: “Oh my father! The donkey gave her life to you, which now has expired. She gave her life to you and now she will give her meat to the dogs.” When the father heard the news, he responded from the depth of his heart: Oh!

He said “Oh my jenny, oh my blond jenny! I am ninety years old and close to dying. I will not forget you until I die. Who has ever done something like this, which stupid Mahmud has done?”

In Afghanistan, the polysemous word khar (donkey) means that this story about a donkey may also be interpreted as a political comment. The ubiquitous donkey may be associated with many meanings such as the underdog, workers, or the dispossessed. Often, the term is used in connection with a person’s humiliation, a particularly popular theme in many Afghan jokes and stories. These humorous stories may also reveal traces of Sufi thought since the term donkey is often used by Sufis as a metaphor of humiliation for village mullahs who strictly adhere to Islam’s normative and exoteric traditions (see Azizi 1995; Dupree 1973:128-131; Mills 1991:13). Further, a song about a donkey may be seen to function as an “ideological and political challenge” and as a means of commenting on current or past political leaders (Mills 1991:13). A donkey may also suggest a community’s poverty and therefore represent a critique of wealth and of local elites who in 1998 were successful commanders loyal to either Rabbani or Massoud. The effectiveness of this polysemous song
was thus achieved through the “transformative power on everyday experience by a...funny process of ironization and inversion” (Mills 1991:13).

The third and final song which describes a conversation between a husband and wife, has a sexual theme. Most probably for this reason, Ahmad Ali requested the permission of the Sunni political authorities before performing it. As in the performance of “Mahmud and the Donkey”, the audience was noticeably affected by the song “Wife and Husband”, reacting with outbursts of laughter [view song husband&wife.mov; CD ROM 1].

**Wife and Husband**

Listen to the story of a wife and a husband.
The wife was a very vulgar daughter,
She was like a bitch.

In our village, there was once a couple like this,
who were biting each other like snakes
from morning until evening.

They had no belongings and nothing to eat.
They had no money and - no prejudice - no built home.

Their home was in ruins and full of spiders and lice.
One day the unemployed husband said to his wife,
come on and feed some elastic through my tomban. 105

His wife replied, where is the string?
We have no string, and the lamb is also not cheap!

You are a vulgar son....

The lyrics make fun of an impoverished couple and include some ‘racy’ language. Such a song could not help but call to mind issues of gender separation and to be heard as a reaction against the general taboo on sexual expression in a poor orthodox Islamic society. In such a repressive climate, the audience’s hearty laughter may have reflected a heightened sense of enjoyment at hearing such rare – and public – risqué allusions. The rhythmic pattern of this song consisted mainly of a three beat schema. 106 Ahmad Ali’s singing predominated and included short and rhythmically based melodic phrases similar to the piece “Advice”. While the lyrics do not refer to the *buzkashi* horses, the strumming sound of the *dambura* was evocative of their galloping

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105 A *tonban* colloquially pronounced *tomban*, is the name for the baggy trousers worn by all Afghan men.
106 The rhythm of Ahmad Ali’s strumming was in patterns of triple beats (that is 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 etc.).
and through this possible iconicity, the musical performance may thus have formed a further connection with the immediate context.

Playful and suggestive songs have long been part of Afghanistan’s cultural heritage. Prior to Afghanistan’s Islamic governance, marginal kesbis (professional performers) would have been at liberty to present a wide variety of satirical and even critical styles, but which even at that time would have implicitly reflected their social low status (see Mills 1991:12). Prior to 1992, a performance like that of Ahmad Ali’s “Wife and Husband” song would have been a marginal but still acceptable cultural activity. In order to earn money, artisans such as musicians have traditionally been in a position to provide socio-critical commentary and even to discuss women—who are generally secluded from public life—in an otherwise demeaning way through mocking and humorous activities. During the time of my research, however, sexual or humorous songs were extremely problematic given the escalation of orthodoxy throughout the province and as a consequence, musicians had to exercise particular care in terms of when and where they performed such songs.

**Dances in Chahar Deh**

The only public dance events that I observed in Badakhshan occurred several weeks after jeshen in Chahar Deh, an ethnically and religiously homogeneous Ismaili village. Chahar Deh is in relative isolation from the district town of Buz Dara, even more remote than Chashma Bozurg, and thereby relatively sheltered from local and district Sunni Badakhshi military commanders and authorities. My visit to a voluntary work project in this village seemed to function as the stimulus for a spontaneous public aesthetic performance. The project, a joint scheme between Chahar Deh and an international NGO, sought to improve the village’s access to clean drinking water. Until then, the villagers had been entirely dependent upon a small stream that was channelled from a spring about two kilometres above Chahar Deh. Given the extreme altitude of 3000-3250m, the stream froze annually from autumn to spring, which meant that villagers had to make an arduous and often dangerous trip by foot or donkey to collect water at its source.

Enayatullah Qurban, who served as both the village leader and khalifa, was the organiser of the local labour for this project. Astounded by my interest in local cultural heritage, he not only condoned but actively patronised an aesthetic
performance by sending a worker to fetch musical instruments from the village, a ninety-minute return journey from the work site near the mouth of the spring. During the morning tea as well as the lunch break, the khalifa then asked the local amateur musicians who owned the instruments, to play. The other workers sat on the ground in a circle around the musicians who played a Pamiri rubab (an index of Ismaili culture), a ghichak, and a large-sized daf which is also unique to the Ismaili-inhabited regions of Badakhshan and was referred to in Mahmud bin Wali’s seventeenth century historical account of Nasir Khusraw’s shrine (see Chapter Five and earlier discussion this chapter). The songs performed were of a local genre, mahali, but since they were also at times referred to as falak, it seems that these two categories are often used interchangeably.

The dances were not announced, but seemed to arise spontaneously; they marked the end of each entertainment set and appeared to be the high points of a typical public event. Only two members of Chahar Deh’s community, who seemed to be the village’s dance specialists, performed solo and duet dances. The other villagers who encircled the dancers, whilst not dancing themselves, were engaged by clapping. All participants at this impromptu performance were civilians and were not associated with any of the Islamist groups. In fact, during a number of visits to the Chahar Deh village, I did not ever encounter any armed villagers. This was a relatively rare experience in Badakhshan.

Towards the end of the first music set that was performed during the morning break, Barakat Beg, one of the local volunteer labourers who had been sitting with the other workers, rose to his feet, cleared stones from a small area of the ground directly in front of the musicians and entered the circle of the audience to dance to the accompaniment of the ensemble’s music [view dance localsolodance(od)1km.mov; CD ROM 2]. Throughout his subsequent

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107 According to informants, the large-sized daf is only played by Ismaili men in Badakhshan, whereas a smaller daf is played by women and girls of all sectarian groups in Badakhshan during weddings as well as religious and non-religious festivals. For a more detailed account of the female daf in other Muslim territories see Doubleday (1999).

108 The location of this performance at high altitude and outdoors made it impossible to record the ensemble’s sound satisfactorily. The rhythmic accompaniment during Barakat Beg’s solo dance was unclear; the musicians created an uneven rhythm in which the beats appeared to fall a little too early. Two main beats were noticeable which seemed to lie somewhere between a five-, six- and seven-beat rhythm. The musicians’ execution of the second beat created a ‘pulling’ effect. In contrast, the members of the audience clapped a ‘straight’ and relatively even rhythm. However, they did not appear to be always clapping in synchrony with the rhythm of the music. The ghichaknawaz (ghichak virtuoso) played a melodic phrase which was...
improvised solo dance routine, Barakat Beg’s attention was mostly directed towards the visitors and honoured guests: an Afghan engineer who was supervising the NGO project, and me. Barakat Beg used a very narrow base of support and constantly maintained close contact with the ground, travelling minimally through the available space via repeated sideways shuffles, steps and spins. His repertoire predominantly incorporated his arms while his torso remained relatively erect and centred. In Laban terminology, his arms produced ‘gestural’ actions through the use of frequent ‘arc-like’, ‘indirect’, and outwardly directed movements. In contrast, his lower limbs served a ‘postural’ function, providing firm support and balance. Barakat Beg spun mostly in an anti-clockwise direction while he rotated many parts of his upper torso. Infrequent changes to his body shape were largely generated by his arms which accessed his near-reach ‘kinesphere’ and which evinced gentle, curvy and ‘free-flowing’ movement qualities that conveyed a sense of weightlessness. The spinning suggested an upward direction of the dancer even though he did not physically leave the ground.

Several minutes into this solo dance, a second local worker, Jafer Baba, also eagerly moved into the circle to dance with Barakat Beg. Both dancers were dressed in their everyday work clothes (shalwar qamiz). The villagers seemed familiar with the dance routine of these performers and after this duet, the morning break concluded and they resumed their labour. However, during the subsequent lunch break, the khalifa again asked the amateur musicians to play. After a few songs, the previous seemingly-improvised dance routine was repeated, with Barakat Beg firstly dancing alone, and then performing a duet with Jafer Baba [view dance localduet(od)Ikm.mov; CD ROM 2].

In this performance, Barakat Beg tended to remain in the background and danced in place, while Jafer Baba danced in the leading capacity, his individual dance style utilising large amplitude arm movements and rapid turning actions of his body. For the most part, the two dancers performed together in what appeared to be a semi-structured routine, but occasionally they also performed their own improvised solo dances. Their apparent familiarity with their movement repertoire and with each other gave the impression that the performers had regularly danced together at similar functions in the past. While

repeated throughout the piece. The sound of the Pamiri rubab largely drowned out the daf and ghichak. This, in addition to the strong wind rushing through the valley, rendered the sound recording virtually inaudible. Towards the latter part of the song, the Pamiri rubab player started to sing a local folk song, a falak that again was almost inaudible on the sound recording.

109 See Chapter Two and the glossary of LMA terms (Appendix Four).
the two dancers mostly faced each other, they did not make any form of physical contact during the entire dance. This effect of being kinaesthetically complementary functioned to confirm their familiarity and experience as co-dancers. Several other sign-object relations, such as the placement of Barakat Beg’s right foot and Jafer Baba’s left foot in front of their bodies, the simultaneous raising of their arms and mostly anti-clockwise spinning, were further indicative of a familiar and complementary performance style and genre. Moreover, since many of the elements of these dances movements resembled qualities of historical dances recorded in Munjan over three and a half decades ago (these will be discussed below), they may also reflect a long-standing dance tradition. Undoubtedly, these dance performances constituted a form of embodied local heritage and testified to the vitality and continuing pride of the community in their local culture. According to local informants, dancing only ever occurred in the village in the absence of Sunni military commanders.

When one of the two strings of the ghichak snapped during this duet and the musician was forced to feed a new string into his instrument, Khalifa Enayatullah Qurban reached for the daf and used this opportunity to demonstrate his own skills as a musician. He immediately initiated a faster beat and thereby changed the musical mood and rhythm. As in the solo dance, the sound of the Pamiri rubab was not audible. Towards the end of the performance, the ghichak player joined the khalifa’s drumming and the strumming of the Pamiri rubab player. The dance styles during both sets of performances at the morning tea and lunch breaks were very similar and described by the villagers as raqs mahali (local dance). Some musical similarities such as a relatively ambiguous rhythm that fluctuated between duple and triple meter, were evident between this piece and the religious qasida “Rawan” in Chashma Bozurg and may thus possibly indicate a religious element in the performance at Chahar Deh or further support the notion of a local musical tradition. The audience was actively engaged with the dancing throughout both performances, responding with laughter and clapping in time with the dancers’ stepping, the daf player’s duplet metre or even in their own rhythm.

In 1963, men’s solo dances and the duets of men and boys from Wilgue village in the Munjan valley of south-eastern Badakhshan were recorded during the

110 The rhythm was again ambiguous but seemed to include a seven-beat rhythm as well as an overall duplet metre. The ghichaknawaz, however, played a repetitive basic melody.
Badakhshan expedition of the Linden Museum in Stuttgart, Germany, under the anthropological leadership of Friedrich Kussmaul and Peter Snoy and the film-maker Helmut Schlenker (1963). Like Chahar Deh and Chashma Bozurg, Wilgue is a homogeneous Ismaili village (see also Snoy 1964:669). But in comparison with the spontaneity of the performances in Chahar Deh, those recorded by Snoy and Kussmaul were staged as an official display of local culture and for the purpose of filming a ‘typical’ local performance. Nevertheless, comparison of this historical footage with the performances I witnessed in Chahar Deh three and a half decades later indicates the endurance of local heritage in this region in spite of the tremendous political and social upheavals that have occurred during this time. While the instruments played by the musicians from Munjan can be seen to be two dafs and a tula, unfortunately, limited technology at the time of filming in 1963 meant that no sound was recorded.

Unlike the event in Chahar Deh when the dance space was improvised, a permanently designated area functioned as Wilgue’s venue for festivities, gatherings and meetings, and was used on the recorded occasion. At the beginning and end of each performance in Wilgue, the dancers formally acknowledged the VIPs. The solo dance was characterised by skilful anti-clockwise and clockwise spins which were led by soft, flowing and indirect arm gestures that extended to the limits of the adult dancer’s kinesphere. This dancer, like the

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111 The villages in the Munjan valley are in relative proximity to Pakistan’s border and adjoin the Afghan province of Nuristan in north-eastern Afghanistan, which is inhabited by ethnic Nuristanis (see Maps 2 and 3). It is therefore important to appreciate that as a result of this proximity, some cultural overlay may exist between the neighbours of this region. I was unable to visit the Munjan valley, but would imagine that differences in cultural practices exist between villages in the Munjan valley and Chahar Deh.

112 Personal communication with Dr Peter Snoy, Germany, 2000.

113 The role of governor was played by the researchers’ Afghan translator. At the time of the performance, the musicians were already known to the anthropologists (Personal communication with Peter Snoy, 2000).

114 The original footage is archived at the Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film (IWF) in Göttingen, Germany, but sound recordings do not appear to be in existence (Personal communication with the IWF and Peter Snoy in Germany in 2000).

115 Personal Communication with Peter Snoy, August 2000. Snoy actually referred to this space as a classical dance venue, “ein klassischer Tanzplatz”. It was common for any member of the community to start to dance and others could join in at any time. The performance space was surrounded by megalith-like seats. A large rock also adjoined this space and was used by the village’s youth for weightlifting exercises. Another stone was used to play a board game equivalent to the German game Mühle (Nine Men’s Morris). For details of this game see Gomme (1984:414-419).
performers of Chahar Deh, consistently remained in contact with the ground through a series of complex patterns of foot placements. Wrist movements were also frequently used in a gestural fashion. This solo dancer gave the impression of being a well-accomplished and experienced performer.

Another dance performed in Wilgue by two adult villagers also evinced many similarities with the previous solo dance as well as with the duet of Chahar Deh in 1998 [view dance historicalduet.mov; CD ROM 3]. At the end of the duet, the performers received a monetary tribute from the event’s patron, which seemed to represent a reward for their successful performance of local cultural heritage. The second duet at this public event was performed by two boys [view dance historicalboys'dance.mov; CD ROM 3]. Their dance also shared similar gestures, structures and qualities with the previous performances, yet their execution of movements was more fluid and coordinated and included faster spins. The boys’ dance style thus seemed to be more professional and less improvised than the previous solo dances. Some gestures, such as their use of outstretched arms, were reminiscent of the wings of a bird. The white-turbaned boy in particular, danced elegantly and confidently, periodically skipping and being momentarily airborne, but retaining an introspective demeanour and avoiding eye contact with the audience.

Several gestures and movement qualities in this dance, such as the arching of the back of the white-turbaned dancer, could be interpreted as icons of femininity. However, due to the cultural sensitivity of this practice (see Chapter Five), I have not been able to confirm this hypothesis with Afghan informants. These apparently effeminate gestures may be linked to the bache bazi tradition, but it is also possible that the dancer naturally danced in this style or that he was imitating a male dancer who may himself have been exposed to the bache bazi tradition. The emotional responses of the audience were again manifested through their physical actions of clapping and smiling throughout the performances.

116 The dancers, well aware of each other’s presence, seemed to perform a familiar routine. The spins, as with the previous dance, were performed in both anti-clockwise and clockwise directions and with a complex shuffling pattern. One dancer would generally take the lead while the other dancer responded. It seems highly likely that these dancers had previously performed together.
The public performances of religious traditions such as the outdoor prayer at *id-e gurban*, which is influenced by its Arabian religio-cultural background and conducted in a similar fashion throughout the global Islamic community, remained unaffected during the time of my research. These religious practices were viewed by ruling Sunni military and religious authorities as legitimate (*halal*) cultural performances and served as truly liminal practices. They were marked by an orthopraxy which included restraint, containment and solemnity, and represented a means by which sacred knowledge is indexically (through contiguity) brought from the past into the present, yet at the same time is connected to the future through embodied memory.

In contrast, the performance of more complex or composite religious practices such as the religious music of the Ismailis which blends Ismaili, Sufi and local traditions, were more restricted. Sunni authorities at best regarded these performances with ambivalence, but more commonly accorded them a non-religious status and hence interpreted them as forbidden (*haram*). The religious music of the Ismailis in Badakhshan was seen to be controversial therefore and consequently, performances were rare, secretive and covert so as to evade the attention of Sunni authorities. Yet these musical events are both integral to the religious praxis of Badakhshan’s Ismailis and serve as important markers of their cultural difference from other sectarian groups. Indeed, the restrictions imposed by Sunni religio-political authorities on Ismaili religious practices concurred with the historical, social and political marginalisation of Ismailis in Badakhshan. At the same time, it seems that it was exactly this positioning on the fringes of mainstream Badakhshi society that granted some Ismaili leaders, such as the community leader and *wakil* Habib Shah and the *Khalifa* Enayatullah Qurban, the freedom to publicly patronise a range of extremely restricted aesthetic practices – those of public music and dance performances. Economically and politically, the Ismaili leaders may have had little to lose but much to gain in terms of the support of their own constituencies as well as the sheer enjoyment of participating in cultural aesthetic performances.

The sports of both *buzkashi* and *kushti giri* are associated with Badakhshan’s local culture and possibly with the wider Turkic- and Persian-speaking culture of northern Afghanistan. Originating during pre-Islamic times, *buzkashi*, for example, is generally taken to be an index of the local population’s nomadic ancestry. These ancient games represent bodily practices in which players have the potential to express warlike qualities of aggression, toughness and
resilience and to enact contests of mythical or epic-like proportions. Although these contests were superficially forms of public entertainment, they also expressed significant political agendas. As I witnessed during the *buzkashi* tournament in Faizabad in 1998, much more was at stake than just scoring points. Unresolved personal feuds frequently flared but seemed to be also resolved during this game. Moreover, many competitors were the agents of local or district military commanders who were often aligned with Islamist factions of the Hezb-e Islami and Jamiat-e Islami. In addition, contestants were often also members of either Rabbani's Faizabad *shura* or Massoud's *shura-e nazar*, a fact which occasionally led to intra-party rivalries. Furthermore, contestants and their political mentors were supported by audience participants who were generally members of the sportsperson's or commander's *qawm*, but may have also been connected through regional alliances.

These non-religious activities occurred during the special public events of *nowruz* and *jeshen*, celebrations customary to Afghanistan. While the Taliban strictly banned the *nowruz* festival, they did permit the celebration of *jeshen*, albeit without entertainment. In Badakhshan, these public festivals were deemed by the Badakhshi religious and political authorities to be acceptable under Hanafi jurisprudence. Interestingly, the two sport activities of *buzkashi* and *kushti giri* were the only two practices listed in the ‘culture’ section of the internet homepage of the Jamiat-e Islami (1999). Clearly, these recreational performances were seen to be more preferable forms of cultural heritage than the contentious non-religious aesthetic practices of music and dance. In fact, while the public performance of music was rare, the even more controversial nature of dance meant that it was not even alluded to in public discourse in Badakhshan and on only one occasion in a very remote location, did I witness dancing in the public domain. As will be further elucidated in Chapter Seven, in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999, music and dance events arose mostly in the physical absence of local military and religious authorities or on the more rare occasions that authorities viewed such performances as significant forms of local cultural heritage and which they did not interpret as conflicting with Islam.

While the effects of the local binary *halal/haram*, religious/non-religious, were apparent in many of the performances described here, it is important to appreciate that most events combined aspects of both categories. For example, *buzkashi* includes some Islamic rituals such as the *halal* killing of the calf, and non-religious music often contained references to normative and/or mystical Islam. The Ismaili religious music is clearly considered by the Ismailis
themselves to be an Islamic practice. Yet at the same time, this performance tradition has been regarded by the Badakhshi Sunnis as a non-religious and, therefore, reprehensible activity. This example exemplifies how performances may shift along the continua of religious/non-religious, public/private in accordance with the prevailing context.
Aesthetic Performances at Semi-Public and Private Events

The longstanding controversy surrounding aesthetic performances in Islamic societies is by now apparent. Yet at the same time, the historical review of the positioning of cultural performances in Afghan society has shown that the contentious nature of these practices has the potential to shift – at least to some degree – in accordance with religious, political and social considerations. This somewhat fluid approach to aesthetic practices was particularly manifest in Badakhshan during the Taliban era when the integration of multiple identities – Islamic, Islamist, traditional, and local – into daily life was at the core of a prevailing state of profound cultural confusion as to the appropriateness of Afghan traditional practices in an Islamic context. At that time, the weak Afghan government under President Rabbani, which had been forced to relocate to Badakhshan, and the Badakhshi provincial administration, were both comprised of political and military leaders from Islamist parties especially the Jamiat-e Islami and Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami, the latter propounding ultra-conservative policies. Undoubtedly, the United Front’s accommodation of such conservative Islamists reflected their over-riding priorities of maintaining an effective anti-Taliban resistance and ensuring the endurance of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in a situation marked by an intensifying groundswell of conservative Islam and substantial challenging of the Islamic State of Afghanistan’s high moral ground of Islamist ideals by the Taliban’s espousal of ‘pure’ Islam. The consequence however was a heightened degree of cultural questioning with understandings of aesthetic practices tending to reflect the social demarcations effected by education, Islamic sectarian groups, political affiliations, and ethnic identities.
With the exception of the Ismaili religious music described in the previous chapter, discussion of aesthetic performances has thus far focussed on public events that any male member of a particular community had the option of potentially attending. While sport events and amusement activities, such as those associated with the nowruz festivals in Faizabad and Buz Dara, did not frequently occur in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999, when they did arise, they were performed publicly and without censorship by government or local authorities. In contrast, the infrequent and secretive performance of aesthetic practices reflects the fact that they were largely perceived by Badakhshan’s conservative Islamist leaders as controversial if not ‘unlawful’. Analysis of these rare performances thus inevitably brings to the fore the tenuous relationship between politics, religion and culture that existed in Badakhshan at the end of the 1990s.

**Semi-Public Performances**

The restrictions imposed on non-religious activities by Badakhshan’s religio-political leadership inevitably meant that a less public, more private domain was chosen for aesthetic performances. Performers or organisers of these events usually selected venues and timed performances in such a manner that only a select group from the broader population was present. The intention was always to exclude the general public and in particular conservative military forces. Two of the aesthetic performances I witnessed in Badakhshan occurred as semi-public events. The first performance was an indoor music recital in a public school in Chahar Deh; the second performance which included music and dance arose during a picnic in Faizabad.

Shortly before the departure of Buz Dara’s high school boys for the jeshen parade (see Chapter Six), Sharif, the school’s Ismaili maintenance worker, arrived from his village that was approximately an hour’s walk away, with an instrument hidden under his shawl. Hearing of my interest in local culture and learning from a Sunni colleague that I was visiting the school for the jeshen parade rehearsal, he had decided to bring his Pamiri rubab to the school to play some local music for me. Sharif had timed his arrival and subsequent performance to ensure that the teachers and students had already left for the parade and buzkashi tournament. With the exception of two elderly bystanders and a school teacher who was Sharif’s friend, the school was virtually empty as Sharif sat on the only bench in an otherwise unfurnished classroom and sang and played local songs as well as poems by Shamsuddin (also Shams al-Din)
Hafez (1320-1389), Saadi (1184-1291) and Nasir Khusraw.\textsuperscript{1} The song "Shamsuddin Mohammad" is a ghazal, the excerpt of which includes a tribute to the poet Hafez who is not the classical Mohammad Shams al-Din Hafez, but another local poet who imitates his style and appropriates his name. The fact that a Pamiri rubab was used for this performance clearly connected this song with local Ismaili culture and religion. As the performer sings in a Pamiri dialect, the lyrics are difficult to understand and as a consequence only three of the seven baits of this ghazal are translated here [view song shams.mov; CD ROM 2].

\textit{Shamsuddin Mohammad [matla]}

The beautiful and fair royal looks at the beggar.  
Have mercy on me for I am burnt and mean.

Look at me, the dervish, and cure my illness  
with a glimpse of your flirtatious gaze that emanates from your drunken, black eyes.

The beautiful and fair royal looks at the beggar.  
Have mercy on me for I am burnt and mean.

\textit{[shah bait]\textsuperscript{2}}

Candles, flowers, butterflies and nightingales have all gathered together.  
Oh friend, be merciful and have pity on my loneliness!

The beautiful and fair royal looks at the beggar.  
Have mercy with me for I am burnt and mean.

Several of the words such as dervish, \textit{ghamze} (flirtatious gaze), \textit{bulbul} (nightingale), \textit{parwana} (butterfly), \textit{gul} (flower), and \textit{sham} (candle), provide likely metaphoric links to Sufism and spiritual love. Some words have dual meanings for example \textit{gul} and \textit{sham} also symbolise the beloved, and \textit{bulbul} and \textit{parwana} are both symbols for lovers. In addition, the image of a \textit{bulbul} may represents someone who loves flowers and the nightingale may thus signify a lover or a beloved, often one who is not necessarily faithful since the bird will travel from tree to tree to seduce a series of people with its beautiful singing. A nightingale may further symbolise the season of spring and be interpreted therefore as a symbol of life and renewal. Such extensive symbolic references are common features of Persian poetry.

\textsuperscript{1} Both Hafez and Saadi are Persian poets.
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Shah bait} is the main \textit{bait} (verse or poetic line) that has become a famous proverb.
The spontaneous shouting of ‘Buz Dara’ by an elderly local Ismaili man following the singing of the name of his home town (2:41), may be understood as his personal affiliation with the local place of performance, but the action also fostered the listeners’ ‘real connections with the object’.

The subtle nodding of another elderly bystander in rhythm with the music (4:47) is an example of common, almost universal actions that arise when music creates solidarity or a consensual community in action. The Pamiri rubab seemed to have two pitch centres and followed a triple rhythm. The song’s melody resembled some characteristics of the major Arabic scale maqam rast (see Poché 2001a). Using a plectrum, Sharif played his lute in a particular style of upward and downward strumming which was noticeably different from the style of the Pamiri rubab religious music performance in Chashma Bozurg (see rawan.mov). It is not clear if this technique represents the stylistic differences of an entertainment genre versus a religious genre, or if it simply represented the musician’s individual style of playing. The fact that Sharif referred to a handwritten note to refresh his memory of the song’s lyrics, may be evidence of his lack of opportunity to regularly perform. This private performance in a public space, yet organised at a time that would ensure few witnesses, confirms that performances in Badakhshan did not readily conform to the binary categorisation of private/public. Moreover, it is clear that individuals such as Sharif actively worked within the limitations of their circumstances to subvert prevailing prohibitions on aesthetic performances.

The second semi-public performance occurred at a mela (an outdoor picnic) which is a favourite pastime in Afghanistan. Prior to the jihad against the Communist government and the ongoing warfare between the Taliban and the United Front, it was common during holidays to organise a picnic with friends or relatives in a private scenic setting such as a garden, park or an orchard. In many cities, chahar shambe awal-e sal (the first Wednesday of the Persian New Year) was a particularly popular occasion for picnics (see Sakata 1983:18). At such events, food was prepared and shared among the guests who

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3 See Peirce (1931-1958:2.265). This affiliation may also be understood as a dicent index (a sign of actuality). In Peircean terms this shouting may also be defined as an emotional interpretant.

4 In Peircean terms this physical reaction may be understood as an energetic interpretant.

5 The maqam rast ‘consists of four similar and successive tetrachords, each called räst and extending over two octaves. The...nature of the mode is made evident by a trichord..., a tetrachord...or a pentachord’ (see Poché 2001a).

6 The Dari word mela can be understood as a picnic, an outing in the countryside, but also a fair, fete or folk festival.
would later perform local music and solo dances. Occasionally, professional performers were also hired (see Baily 1988:143). *Melas* were extremely rare in Badakhshan during the time of my research, in part due to the economic hardships of that time but especially because of the general state of lawlessness associated with ongoing civil war, as well as a general anxiety about the tacit and sometimes more overt censorship of entertainment. Even in the event that a group of friends were in a financial position to organise a picnic, it was difficult to find musicians and instruments and to locate a suitable site that would not attract undue attention. Since people tended to subject each other to surveillance, in the event that a person held a grievance against another, he may have extracted a bribe from the concerned parties by threatening to report the event to a religious or a political/military authority. The consequences of being reported were manifold: from a fine, which in itself was difficult given the dire economic straits of most Badakhshi, to incarceration.

In April 1998, the predominantly secularly- or even university-educated Sunni Afghan staff of an international aid organisation in Faizabad, who were mostly local Tajik and Uzbek Badakhshi but also some Pushtuns from other northern provinces, organised a *mela* to be held on *joma* on behalf of their NGO’s European project manager. The majority of these workers were not aligned with any of the major Islamist parties; a few had fought as *mujahideen* on the side of the Jamiat-e Islami during the *jihad* against the Communist regime but in 1998 they were no longer actively politically involved. Each staff member was excited about the prospect of a *mela*, as it was almost impossible to hold such an event without the patronage, security and logistical support of an international organisation. The *mela* was held in Khushbad, a village located near the riverbed of the Kokcha and approximately an hour’s drive from Faizabad. A small meadow lined with shady poplars was selected as the picnic site. Hence, similar to the context of the performance of the Ismaili musician Sharif in Buz Dara, this *mela* was an exclusively private event, yet it occurred in a public space. However, apart from some children and men from the nearby village who watched at a distance from behind a mud-brick fence, the picnic was virtually concealed from potential onlookers.

The NGO was staffed by nine Afghans and three Europeans. Two of the foreigners as well as one of the local staff were female, all of whom attended the picnic, the latter at the insistence of the European women. In Badakhshan, as elsewhere in Afghanistan, the inclusion of women at a picnic was not a typical cultural practice and in the rare event that they were to attend, they would have been usually seated separately from the men in a specially
designated area. Sayyid Rahman, one of the Tajik Badakhshi staff members, had been asked by the other Afghan employees to bring his battery-operated Casio keyboard to the picnic. Another employee, Mohammad Sang, had brought along a locally-made *zirbaghali* (clay drum). The keyboard was powered by one of the NGO's car batteries and was connected through a complicated wiring system to their ghetto blaster. I had initially planned not only to film the event but also to record the music separately with a small walkman and for that reason, I had a professional microphone. This was claimed by the amateur musicians, however, and although it was not possible to successfully connect the microphone to the sound system, the musicians, enjoying the fact that it looked professional, insisted on using it. The Casio keyboard which had been purchased during the singer's university years in Mazar-e Sharif, was especially popular among the Afghan staff and seemed to be valued as an image of modernity.

The entertainment began with a musical section that was followed by the *mela*’s highlight: improvised solo dances and a concluding group dance. Sayyid Rahman, an amateur musician and the singer at this event, was supported on *zirbaghali* by either Mohammad Sang or Wali Jan, and sang mostly improvised cover-versions of songs by Afghan expatriate musicians, while most of the other Afghan staff members sang along and clapped. Sayyid Rahman’s use of a Western battery-operated keyboard may be indexically associated with his desire to belong to a modern society, but alternatively may have simply been the only instrument he was able to purchase. In line with the custom of Afghan picnics, every male was required to perform a solo dance. Many of these dances were traditional in content, particularly those performed by the non-university-educated local staff. In contrast, the employees who had been educated at universities in Kabul or Mazar-e Sharif performed improvised solo dances that combined traditional and modern styles. The movie clip of this...
picnic was selected on the grounds that it shows a traditional Badakhshi dance which to a degree resembles the traditional dances recorded during the Stuttgart expedition in 1963 (see localsolodance(od)Fzb.mov).\(^{10}\)

Wearing a \textit{pakol} (woollen cap), the staff member Yusuf, another Tajik Badakhshi, had an upright posture and used a narrow stance whilst dancing mostly in-place. In fact, he paid little attention to his foot placements and rarely changed his direction and focus throughout his improvised solo dance. Unlike the dancers in the public performances, he did not use any spinning in his repertoire, although he did perform some incomplete turns. Through a combination of arm rotations, his upper limbs created curvy and wave-like movements in a gestural manner. When Yusuf briefly and simultaneously touched both of his shoulders before again extending his arms (0:19), a trace of an older dance tradition became noticeable. Although Yusuf is a Sunni Badakhshi, this type of gesture was also a common characteristic of the public dances of the Ismailis from Munjan recorded in 1963 and of those that I recorded in Chahar Deh. Again reminiscent of the performances in Munjan, Yusuf bowed slightly towards the musicians and some of the VIPs at the end of the performance, signifying a customary gesture of respect. His limited repertoire of movements may have been indicative of the increasing unfamiliarity of Faizabad’s populace with this cultural performance tradition, given the prevailing political climate. Indeed, and perhaps again reflecting the lack of opportunities to perform, it seemed that in comparison with the other performers discussed thus far, Yusuf was not an accomplished dancer.

In Afghanistan, many special events such as picnics or weddings typically concluded with the performance of an \textit{atan-e meli} (national dance). This was also the case in Khushbad. While the musical accompaniment was loosely based on the Pushtun \textit{atan} melody, the use of a modern battery-operated keyboard and a \textit{zirbaghali} made this performance rather unconventional since a Pushtun \textit{atan} is traditionally performed with a \textit{dhol} (frame drum) and a \textit{surnai} (double reed instrument).\(^{11}\) The characteristics of the \textit{atan}'s movements

\(^{10}\) Sayyid Ali’s keyboard performance in this piece was characterised by his choice of an almost Phrygian scale (E, F, G, A) with a 2/4 rhythm (see Appendix One for further comments on the Phrygian scale). The song’s tonal structure was also limited and did not go beyond a tetrachord.

\(^{11}\) In the 1960s, when the German ethnomusicologist Felix Hoerburger (1969) first heard of a harmonium – at that time considered to be a modern instrument in Afghanistan – being used during an \textit{atan} in Ghazni Province in southern Afghanistan, he described this occurrence as
differed greatly from the other dances discussed thus far. By following a leader who supposedly knew the choreographic structure of the *atan* well, the dancers travelled mostly in a circle by stepping sideways, but also forwards and backwards into and out of the circle whilst executing a clapping routine. Initially, the tempo of the dance started slowly, then gradually increased. The dancers fully accessed their potential kinespheres by extending their bodies diagonally from the lower left to upper right quadrants of the space around them. Compared to the more curvy and wave-like actions of the previous dances, the *atan* was characterised by ‘directional’ and ‘spoke-like’ movements, the latter particularly evident during the strong clapping of the dancers. Whilst stepping into and out of the circle, the dancers ‘shaped’ their torsos through growing and shrinking actions of their trunks, arms and knees. Unlike the solo dances, the *atan*’s effort qualities were predominantly ‘direct’, ‘strong’, ‘sudden’, and ‘bound’. To complement these actions, ‘indirect’, ‘light’, ‘sustained’, and ‘free-flowing’ movement qualities were to a lesser degree also incorporated, but with a general preponderance of the movement qualities ‘strength’ and ‘directness’.

The fact that the Afghan NGO workers had not practised or performed this dance for some time was evident in their uncertainty about the movements and lack of coordination as individuals and as a group. The stepping and clapping actions of the dancers did not always follow a regular rhythm. For example, when they stepped into the circle, a double and sometimes even a triple clap per time was executed, whereas when the performers stepped out, a single clap per time was used. In fact, it seemed that every dancer performed the clapping in his own time. Even so, when some of the basic patterns of the *atan* were eventually remembered, they were greatly appreciated by the audience [view dance attan(od)Fzb.mov; CD ROM 2].

The choice by predominantly non-Pushtuns to conclude a Badakhshi cultural event with a Pushtun dance signified the participants’ general approval of this dance as a national symbol, and further reflected the multi-ethnic nature of Badakhshi society. Although not officially invited, local villagers were able to observe the picnic from a distance. For them, the *atan* most probably constituted a spectacle which was no longer a part of their contemporary cultural practice; ultra-conservative doctrines towards non-religious entertainment as well as harsh economic conditions did not often allow any

rather ‘grotesque’ (1969:40). Such Orientalist perspectives, in which traditional art was perceived to be virtually fixed by convention, are now rare.
villagers the luxury of engaging in such leisure pursuits. The inability of these Afghans — Tajiks, Uzbeks and Pushtuns — to recall the choreography of Afghanistan's national dance is further testimony to the marginalisation of the performing arts throughout Afghanistan, including Badakhshan, with prevailing religious attitudes since 1992 having constrained the performance of aesthetic practices. When later interviewed, the participants assured me that they once knew how to perform this dance well. During the Communist regime, the atan had been performed more regularly and without restrictions. Prior to the emergence of the Taliban, the atan had been a well-known Pushtun and national group dance that had implicitly reflected the historical dominance of Pushtuns in Afghan political and cultural life. Since the taking of Kabul by the Taliban and the general state of cultural confusion during the exiled Rabbani Presidency, this once-familiar dance had become an unfamiliar practice. Whereas the Pushtun-dominated Taliban had banned the atan altogether, the performance of an atan in an area under the control of the United Front was only possible because of the semi-public nature of its performance and the remoteness of its location from Faizabad’s conservative religious and political authorities.

The following excerpt from a 1963 documentary film of a semi-public celebration in the Lake Shiwa district (Kussmaul et al. 1963), a high-altitude plateau circa 3000m above sea level in north-eastern Badakhshan, demonstrates a typical outdoor performance of the atan-e meli by Pushtun nomads from Kataghan, present Kunduz province (see Kussmaul 1965:14, 18; Snoy 1996:115). Again there is no sound, but the complex choreography of this group dance is clearly apparent and gives some idea of how the atan was once performed in Badakhshan [view dance historicalatan.mov; CD ROM 3]. The reason for the performance is not entirely clear, but according to Peter Snoy (Personal Communication, 2000), it was staged by the locals for the visiting anthropologists, as was the case in the previous historical examples from Munjan. This performance was a purely male entertainment event. The female members of the nomad community can be seen in one section of the movie clip, occupied with weaving (2:11).

This atan was much more structured and coordinated than the attempt at the picnic in Khushbad. As is common with traditional Pushtun atans, two musicians, a surnai and a dhol player, were located within the circle of

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12 One of its outstanding characteristics, when performed by Pushtuns, was the shoulder-length hair of the dancers which they would swirl in the air as they danced.
performers and accompanied the dance. The dancers wore local clothing similar to contemporary *shalwar qamiz* and their headwear consisted of *taqins* and turbans that were wrapped differently from typical Badakhshi turbans. Scant costumes such as that of the leading dancer who wore only *tombons* (baggy trousers) and a vest that barely covered his upper body and that of another dancer who did not wear a shirt would not have been tolerated anywhere in Afghanistan in the late 1990s. The pistol used by one of the performers functioned as a conventional symbol of the power, strength and tribal unity of the Pushtun nomads. The group's unison indicates the dancers' familiarity with the choreographic complexities of the *atan*. Indeed, in comparison with the other dances described herein, minimal improvisation took place. Using a complex stepping pattern, the dancers moved their whole bodies in an integrated fashion, and elaborately and energetically turned in an anti-clockwise direction (1:33). Their strong double clap was executed with great precision and clarity. Some of the dancers, especially the barely-clothed dancer (2:25), extended to the limits of their kinespheres by skilfully elongating their bodies diagonally. Towards the end of the performance, as the music's tempo seemed to increase, the dancing became more ecstatic. The dancers who followed the two leading performers were not always in perfect synchrony, but occasionally leapt into the air slightly after the leaders.

**Music and Dance Performances at Four Mehmanis**

As previously emphasised, the public and semi-public aesthetic performances that I observed during field research eventuated either in the absence of military commanders and religious authorities or in situations when local authorities were more tolerant of aesthetic entertainment. Historically throughout Afghanistan, *mehmanis*, or parties, would include a sumptuous feast and in addition often a program of aesthetic entertainment, commonly the performance of music and dance. Yet as discussed in Chapter Five, dance in particular and music to a lesser degree were mostly interpreted as un-Islamic practices especially during the final period of the Rabbani Presidency in Kabul. It seems however, that traditionally, interpretations to the contrary were relatively uncommon and tended to be espoused by members of Afghanistan's elite families who had been secularly-educated in Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif, or abroad. For that reason, special strata of society such as *salmanis* (barbers), *kesbis* or *maslakis* (professional performers) traditionally fulfilled the role of
artisans specialising in the genre of entertainment and were hired to perform on occasions such as weddings. In an everyday social context, however, the families of entertainers rarely mixed with other families in the community. Certainly, intermarriage of these families was rare. Only during the later modern period of the late 1960s to the early 1990s when the status of performers, especially classically-trained artists, was enhanced by the rise of popular artists like Ahmad Zaher, did some members of various ethnic and socio-economic groups have the opportunity to interact more freely during public and to a lesser degree private entertainment events. From 1992, with the rise of religious orthodoxy in Badakhshan due to the influence of the conservative factions of the Jamiat-e Islami as well as the radical Hezb-e Islami and ultra-conservative Ittehad-e Islami and as a consequence of the limited secular education available in more rural areas of the province, mehmanis were still held, but generally without aesthetic accompaniments. Hence, in the rare event that a more traditional mehmani was planned, it occurred amidst much secrecy. In 1998, I attended four mehmanis in four different locations in Badakhshan, each of which was accompanied by music performances and three of which (in Dasht-e Islam, Buz Dara and Faizabad) even included both music and dancing.

Bagh-e Zard

The mehmani to feature music only took place in Bagh-e Zard at the end of May 1998. The Afghan program manager of an international aid organisation in Faizabad invited me to join him on a visit to one of their rural sub-offices in Bagh-e Zard, western Badakhshan. I immediately accepted this invitation as motorised transport to the region was otherwise infrequent, mainly because the tracks were only manageable with a four wheel-drive vehicle. Upon arrival in Bagh-e Zard, I inquired about local musicians, in particular Abdullah whose name had been given to me by a Badakhshi informant in Pakistan. Under the pretext of celebrating my visit to this relatively remote community, the Afghan managers of the office decided to organise a mehmani which provided them with the opportunity of inviting Abdullah for a meal and to then request a

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13 During my fieldwork in 1998 and 1999, the expression maslaki was the most common term used to refer to professional musicians. Salmani were not only employed for their artistic abilities, but also for other duties such as blood-letting, circumcisions etc.
music performance in my honour, as well as for the agency’s resident Sunni Afghan officers.\textsuperscript{14}

The local staff of the NGO knew Abdullah from the time when he had been a well-known Badakhshi personality and much-loved for his music. During the various political periods from the late 1960s to the 1980s and before the intensification of conservative Islam in Afghanistan and the consequent bans on non-religious entertainment, Abdullah had performed regularly at official government events in Badakhshan as well as in neighbouring provinces. However, the political upheavals during the Rabbani and Taliban eras had virtually ended Abdullah’s once flourishing music career and his status as one of northern Badakhshan’s most sought-after musicians. In the Bagh-e Zard region, he had particularly felt the influence of ultra-orthodox Islam. Since the district of Bagh-e Zard was under the control of the Baluch Badakhshi Bohadar, an ultra-conservative Hezb-e Islami commander aligned with the United Front, bans on aesthetic performances had been vehemently enforced in the entire region. With his public engagements closely monitored by loyal local extremist military sub-commanders and their soldiers, Abdullah had been compelled to become a full-time farmer and understandably, was particularly anxious that his presence at the compound of the international organisation went unnoticed. Moreover, my visit coincided with the region’s main wheat harvest and as Abdullah had become economically dependent upon his occupation as a full-time farmer, it was not possible for him to socialise or to perform music during daylight working hours. Yet, in spite of these complicated circumstances, Abdullah was overjoyed at being invited to perform at the mehmani, although he sadly commented that in the past, he would have invited me to his own house. This was no longer possible due to the ever-watchful eyes of neighbours and soldiers who may have reported his ‘illicit’ musical activities.

Like Abdullah, the NGO was also concerned about potential misinterpretations of this performance and as a consequence did not publicise it. The organisation did not in any way want to undermine their tenuous working relationship with Commander Bohadar and some of his sub-commanders. Further, for security reasons, it was not feasible for the international organisation to engage a music ensemble which under less stringent Islamic edicts, would have typically included a \textit{zirbaghali}, \textit{dutar} (two-stringed lute), Afghan \textit{rubab} (multi-stringed lute).

\textsuperscript{14} Three senior Sunni Afghan officers worked in this office. Two were Pushtuns from southern provinces and one was a Tajik Badakhshi worker.
lute), and harmonium musicians. But since the nature of ensemble music would have been more audible to the local neighbourhood and thus would have attracted more attention, in 1998, Abdullah arrived alone after dusk at the NGO office with a ghichak hidden under his woollen shawl.

During the course of the simple, yet plentiful feast, Abdullah confessed to having retired from the music profession. In addition to his occupation as a farmer, he claimed that he had become a rish safid (white-bearded elder). He described how he had been inspired to become a musician when as a military conscript in Faizabad in the 1960s, he had attended a performance by Faiz-e Mangal (see Chapter Six), a well-known Badakhshi musician who Abdullah declared to be his greatest musical influence, although he stressed that they did not share the same political views. Within a few years of his release from the army, Abdullah had gained a reputation in Badakhshan as a skilful musician. Yet his music career waned during the 1970s when Afghanistan's elite preferred to patronise North Indian classical (Hindustani) music and instruments as well as Western classical music, jazz and pop and respective instruments. Unfamiliar with Badakhshi culture and seemingly disinterested in the local music genres and instruments, the Pushtun administrators from Kabul who had been given senior government positions in Badakhshan, tended to dismiss Abdullah as a simple local musician and derived much amusement from his ghichak, an instrument that is unique to northern Afghanistan.

With the change of regime in the late 1970s and the beginning of a jihad against the Communist government, mujahideen leaders targeted Abdullah's music, in part because of his performance for Communist authorities. Indeed, the appalling conditions for artistic expression that existed in Badakhshan from 1992 onwards led Abdullah's two sons who are also musicians, to leave Afghanistan. Music had rapidly disappeared from both public and private arenas of Bagh-e Zard since the region had come under the control of ultra-conservative commanders who were nominally loyal to the Rabbani government. In fact, during my visit in 1998, there were only two or three musicians who occasionally secretly performed for private parties or weddings. Abdullah emphasised that in such difficult circumstances, it is essential that

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15 These instruments will be discussed in more detail in the description of the next mehmani in Dasht-e Islam.
16 This Persian expression denotes an elder who is respected in the community for his knowledge and experience.
17 The music of the Kabuli performer Ahmad Zahir is a good example of this period.
any aspiring musician be passionate about music itself, rather as a source of potential income.

After this introduction to his musical life and his reflections on the state of music in the region, Abdullah closed his eyes and began his performance. He initially accompanied his songs with a harmonium that belonged to one of the agency’s Afghan staff members, but later performed on his trademark instrument, the ghichak. As the evening progressed, it became apparent that he was not only a musician but a story teller and comedian. His songs were mostly socio-critical, commenting on contemporaneous issues and the actions of local military commanders. Many of the songs had been written by a local Sufi poet Sikander Gul. The piece selected for this movie clip is a Badakhshi love song, a ghazal entitled “Gardener” which Abdullah performed on his ghichak later in the evening. The song has a range of themes including love, mystical Islam and Badakhshi cultural heritage [view track bache.mov; CD ROM 1].

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Gardener
[ghazal]
...a drunken eye [the eye of the beloved]...

During the morning, she flirts, at noon she is violent
and in the evening she shows contempt.
She is well known to evoke fear and in the face of her gaze is challenging
and perturbing the fame of the eye of the planet Venus.
She is walking fearlessly, flirtatiously and arrogantly.
Oh minstrels! Keep me awake until dawn.
Such an occasion may never occur again.

It is a pity because the gardener is ignorant of the flowers,
Instead, he imagines thorns and spiky, grassy bushes and pulls out the flowers,
making the garden look like a desert.

Everyone who is rejected in love like Mahmud Farkhari,
must withdraw from the tavern completely.
Now he must keep away from the taverns completely.

Not only is Khwaja Shah Wali unknown at the moment of his fever-like love,
but also Hares is like him – that is expressed by me – Besmel,

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18 The melody produced by the ghichak was short and repetitive. The central pitch of A acted as a drone in this song. The quality of Abdullah’s voice seemed to favour short, rhythmic phrases with little ornamentation.
19 The title of the movie clip is incorrectly listed on CD ROM 1 as “Bache Mahmud”. Due to a lack of ongoing access to the software used for the creation of titles for the QuickTime clips, it has not been possible to change the title from “Bache” to “Gardener” on the CD ROM. Hence, the main text will use the correct title of “Gardener”, while the identification on the movie clip remains bache.mov and the title on the track “Bache Mahmud”.

someone who is killed and betrayed by his beloved
and who utters many groans of unknowingness and helplessness.

I appreciate someone who takes the veil from the face of my beloved
and if someone does this today, he will resurrect the world like at the Day of Judgement.

Many of the poetic symbols used here appeared to have a Sufi origin: the term
*gulzar* (flower garden), for example, often pertains to Paradise or to the
sensuousness of a beloved; *bagh-e ban* (gardener) is often understood as a
spiritual guide or a metaphorical lover. The reference to *khar khas* (thorns and straw)
may symbolise competition, in that there are other people who also love
the same flower (the beloved) with the consequence that the lover may become
disillusioned, feeling that his love is not being reciprocated. The term *kharabat*
tavern is also imbued with Sufi symbolism, often signifying “pure unity”
(Arberry 1950:113) but also standing for Sufi meeting places and fountains of
knowledge. In a more profane sense, however, a tavern may also represent a
venue for forbidden pursuits such as dancing, sex, or other immoral practices.
In this *ghazal*, the poet must stop visiting the *kharabat*, since he has lost his
status as a lover and is therefore no longer worthy to mingle with others at the
tavern. The mention of a *chadri* (veil), another ambiguous term, is also a
common Sufi metaphor, denoting impediments to spiritual realisation. Here, it
directly refers to the beloved who must always remain veiled and may thus be
seen as a comment on the restrictions of women in Afghan society whose
absence from public life was lamented by the more moderate Muslims of
Bagh-e Zard.

During virtually the entire performance, Abdullah kept his eyes closed.
Common to singers in many traditions, this action may have been a means by
which Abdullah eliminated the distractions of the present situation, thereby
intensifying his focus on the meaning of the lyrics and music and perhaps also
drawing upon his own experiences. This “experiential quality” is what Peirce
associated with ‘Firstness’, “the conception of being or existing independent of
anything else” (Peirce in Buchler 1955:322-323). Abdullah’s performance
lasted until midnight. As the strict guidelines of the host NGO did not permit
him to stay overnight, he then returned home despite the existing curfew,
approximately an hour’s walk.

The *kharabat* is a purely male environment where fringe dwellers (bohemians, those who are
in love, Sufis) meet for drinks and spiritual and profane discussions. The meetings may
include, for example, discussions about their beloveds who are, however, never present in the
*kharabat*. In some cases, *kharabat* may also refer to a *shahid khane* (see Chapter Five).
Dasht-e Islam

In mid-April 1998, I was invited to my first mehmani in the medium-sized town of Dasht-e Islam in central Badakhshan. This party was my first experience of a private event that featured a music and dance program. Upon my arrival several days prior, I had enquired in the bazaar about local musicians. Within an hour, a message was sent to Yasin Jan, the leader of a local music ensemble, who came to my residence later that day and offered to perform a few songs that evening. As I later discovered via one of my informants, Yasin Jan and his ensemble members had actually been invited to perform by the four local Sunni Tajik Badakhshi staff members of the international NGO who, in the absence of official personnel, had taken the liberty of interpreting my interest in local music as a valid excuse for a mehmani which they hosted on behalf of their employer. They were extremely excited about the proposed performance, especially since, as they later told me, aesthetic events had become very rare in Dasht-e Islam. Like the previous case of Abdullah in Bagh-e Zard and in spite of the existing curfew, the musicians were only able to arrive under the cover of night, which allowed them to conceal and safely transport their instruments. Once on the premises of the NGO, they felt protected from the attention of the ubiquitous soldiers who in that region were loyal to the Sunni Tajik Badakhshi Najmuddin Khan, a senior member of Massoud’s shura-e nazar who had banned all entertainment activities in the areas of his fiefdom.

After dusk, the members of the music ensemble consisting of four Sunni Tajik Badakhshis, arrived: the band leader Yasin Yan who sang and played the Afghan rubab, harmonium and zirbaghali; Baba Jan, the most senior musician of the ensemble, who was also a vocalist, Afghan rubabnawaz and harmonium player; Nasrullah who played the dutar; and Aminullah, the youngest member of the ensemble, who was a vocalist and zirbaghali player. These musicians were all shauqi (amateur) musicians, with the exception of Baba Jan who was alleged by one informant to be a kesbi (professional, hereditary) performer. The Afghan rubab, a multiple-stringed plucked lute, is Afghanistan’s

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21 In Dasht-e Islam, I was accommodated in the compound and office of a relatively modern and isolated international NGO.
22 The Persian noun nawaz (performer) is often adjoined to an instrument’s name to indicate the accomplishment and skill of a performer. The three instruments mentioned here will be discussed in more detail below. For further detailed discussion see also Slobin (1976), Sakata (1983) and Baily (1988).
23 A shauqi is a Dari noun for an amateur performer who has an intense passion for his art.
Aesthetic Performances at Semi-Public and Private Events

quintessential national instrument. Originally introduced from the Middle East, possibly with the advent of Islam, this instrument is mostly associated with Pashtun music, but is also very popular among other ethnic groups. It is commonly used in regional folk music, as in Dasht-e Islam, or for Kabuli radio music. In comparison with the six-stringed Pamiri rubab which is a fretless lute with a retracted peg box, protruding spurs and a small bowl-shaped belly covered with a membrane, the Afghan rubab has a deep, waisted membrane-covered body and has a shorter and fretted neck.\(^{24}\) It is plucked with a flat, wooden plectrum and has three main nylon playing strings that are tuned an interval of a fourth apart.\(^{25}\) The additional fifteen sympathetic wire strings are strung to pegs in the peg box. The combination of these main and resonating strings creates both soft and hard sounds that provide the lute with a unique mellowness. Common throughout northern Afghanistan and the trans-Oxus regions, the dutar is also a lute, but with two metal strings. It is a fretted, deep-bellied and spoon-shaped instrument with a long, narrow neck. Like the Afghan rubab, it is played with a plectrum and usually tuned to a fourth, but sometimes also to a fifth (see Beliaev 1975:206).

After partaking of a larger-than-usual meal of spinach, rice and mutton, the ensemble performed for the small audience of the NGO’s female European worker-in-charge, its four local employees, and me. Vocal and instrumental pieces were performed, including folk songs from Badakhshan, Kataghan,\(^{26}\) as well as from the Kabul and Logar regions. Some of the songs were reminiscent of the once-popular genre of Kabuli radio music. The music example selected here is a song that combines the poetic structures of a ghazal and rubai. One of the central musical features of this song was the Afghan rubabnawaz’s

\(^{24}\) The neck of the Afghan rubab is usually elaborately decorated with cow bone inlays. The entire instrument has the appearance of a horse, especially due to the shape of its retracted peg box.

\(^{25}\) With its two sound chambers and numerous sympathetic strings which often act as drones, the rubab is the ancestor of the Indian sarod. Before the availability of nylon strings from Pakistan, the three main playing strings would have been made from animal intestines.

\(^{26}\) Kataghan is the former name for the province in northern Afghanistan that included Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar (see Chapter Three). In northern Afghanistan, a shared musical culture exists between the former province of Kataghan and contemporary Badakhshan (see Slobin 1976). Until 1992, the Kataghan performance style was performed publicly, semi-publicly and privately throughout the trans-Oxus region as far as the north-western provinces of Balkh, Jawzjan and Samangan. Logar is a predominantly Pashtun province, directly south of Kabul. The province is famous for its music and dance styles. Kabuli radio music is a combination of Hindustani-influenced classical music and Afghan folk music that has emerged since the 1920s, the end result being a generic form of contemporary Afghan art music (see Baily 1994:52).
execution of embellishments such as tremolos and rhythmic figures which are common features of Arabic lute music (see Poché 2001b). Yet unlike Arabic music's prevalent quadruple rhythms, this song was characterised by more local types of triple rhythms, which used lower and upper tetrachords in an ascending and descending order [view song homeland.mov; CD ROM 1].

Homeland

[matila]
The spring of independence has arrived in our country.
Return from the foreign countries, my brothers!

We are your soldiers, we are your hosts playing with our lives.
We are your supporters and your confidants.
Return to the homeland! Oh my brother!
Return to the homeland! Return to the homeland!

...return to the homeland is welcome.
If he comes to sees the flowers in the garden, he is welcome.

From our hearts and souls, we are your friends.
We are the nightingales of your garden.
We love to see you again
Return to the homeland!
Return to the homeland!

Because of the enemy of religion, you have migrated and become homeless.
You have become helpless in foreign cities and countries.

The spring of independence has arrived in our country.
Return from the foreign countries, my brothers!

The lyrics of this song communicated a powerful and contemporary political message: a request for Afghan refugees to return from their countries of exile, to overcome their political differences and to rebuild their Afghan homes. The use of the words mihan and watan (homeland), baradar (brother), azadi (independence),27 and din (religion) created a strong sense of Afghan identity, marked by religious and political unity. The fact that the noun baradar was used in this song is important as it has a religious meaning and refers to the sayings of the Prophet. Afghans are thus encouraged to unite as Muslim Brothers since it was this union that had so greatly helped them to defeat the Communist regime. Such images were pertinent to all participants on the basis of their own personal experiences of decades of civil war. But while the song's references to compassion and forgiveness could be read as a positive message

27 In this case, the word azadi refers to independence, but more generally has the meaning of freedom.
for all Afghans to put aside their religious and political differences, the realisation of a peaceful Afghanistan was clearly improbable at that time. Indeed, even with the current military intervention in Afghanistan led by the United States, such a positive political outcome still remains an imaginary possibility.

In addition to the music program, the entertainment during this mehmani included a number of solo dances that were spontaneously performed at what appeared to be an agreed appropriate time. The four musicians as well as the five male audience members all performed a number of solo dances. The movie clip presents a solo dance by Abdul Shakar, one of the staff members. Shortly after the music ensemble played the initial tunes of “Shish Kebab” (literally ‘Fried Lung and Liver Pieces’), he entered the tiny available space in the centre of the room and began to perform [view dance kateghaniBahrk.mov; CD ROM 2].

This performance was later referred to by audience members as a ‘Kataghani’ dance. Abdul Shakar executed half and three quarter turns around his body axis in an anti-clockwise direction.28 His repeated shoulder and side-to-side neck movements in combination with his perpendicularly outstretched arms appeared to be rather effeminate and may have been indices of the bache bazi genre. However, the controversial nature of this practice in conservative Badakhshan made it impossible to either confirm or repudiate this hypothesis through discussion with local informants. Similar effeminate qualities were also noticeable in a number of dances at the mehmanis in Buz Dara and Faizabad and will be discussed at length later in this chapter. Members of the audience were characteristically and pragmatically engaged with Abdul Shakar’s dancing; they laughed and clapped and made onomatopoetic sounds such as ‘ha’ (1:08). Musically, “Shish Kebab” shared stylistic qualities with the Arabic musical mode maqam hijaz as evident in the sharing of ‘sound images’ such as the stopping and starting of the musical phrase by the melodic instruments (the Afghan rubab, dutar and harmonium), and the use of a

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28 Responding closely to the tunes of the ensemble, Abdul Shakar’s movement characteristics included predominantly free-flowing actions which were combined with a shuffling type of gait. In order to emphasise some of his gestures, he isolated certain actions by periodically holding still various body parts such as his arms, neck and trunk (0:39, 1:21). Throughout the dance, Abdul Shakar moved his arms in an ‘arc-like directional’ fashion, although ‘spoke-like directional’ actions, such as the lateral movements of his neck, were also executed (0:44). Abdul Shakar’s trunk remained generally erect and he utilised a narrow body stance.
dominant duple meter (see also Poché 2001a). But it seemed that the musicians drew predominantly on local musical structures and incorporated these Arabic stylistic qualities chiefly to embellish their local repertoire.

**Buz Dara**

On 30 April 1998, the second day of the jeshen festival in Buz Dara (see Chapter Six), I attended a mehmani that was organised by the Ismaili community leader, Habib Shah. In response to my expressed interest in local culture, he had indicated that in addition to the public music performance which he had arranged to accompany the buzkashi tournament, he would try to organise an evening of music entertainment whilst I was in the area. Given that the region was not without its own considerable political and sectarian tensions between Ismaili authorities trying to serve the interests of an Ismaili majority, and Islamist commanders and government officials representing a Sunni minority, I could not imagine how such a program could possibly be organised, especially given their divergent views on aesthetic practices.

The ostensible reason for the mehmani, to celebrate jeshen and the defeat of the Communist regime, provided Habib Shah with the liberty to hold an indoor evening function and a program of aesthetic performances. Thirty-five people filled Habib Shah’s cramped, carpeted khushkhana (guest quarters) and comprised mostly relatives of the host, fellow elite-Ismailis, Ismaili soldiers who were aligned with Massoud’s shura-e nazar, and a few secularly-educated Sunni Tajik aid workers who were employed by an international NGO and who were originally from other districts within Badakhshan, as well as from Kapisa province. These Afghan humanitarian aid workers were not overtly political but were supportive of Massoud. Noticeably, none of the district’s ruling Sunni Badakhshi political or military authorities or Pushtun aid workers, who were educated in either secular schools or state-controlled madrassas, were in attendance. It was only in the absence of local Sunni political authorities that Habib Shah was able to organise a mehmani at which

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29 It is important to appreciate that the harmonium was not tuned to a Western music’s notion of a concert pitch. The scale employed by the musicians in this piece was (A Flat), B Flat, B, D, E Flat, (F), with B Flat acting as the song’s key note.

30 These soldiers, mainly one commander and some of his soldiers, were at that time accommodated as guests by Habib Shah since their valley, Surkh Dara, was under the control of a Taliban-friendly commander.
local cultural heritage could be proudly displayed through a program of music and dance performances.

With the exception of the host's two daughters who were both under the age of twelve years, all members of the audience were adult or adolescent males. A brief prayer by Habib Shah signified the end of the feast and the beginning of the evening's program. One of the guests, the local poet Hafez Mohammad, formally announced that the evening's entertainment was being held in my honour. The same musicians who had performed earlier that day during the public jeshen celebration at the buzkashi tournament, were invited by Habib Shah to the mehmani: the dambara virtuoso, Ahmad Ali, the dafnawaz, Hasan, and the ghichak player, Karim. Throughout the evening, numerous songs were performed across a range of genres including local Badakhshi, Kataghani, Kabuli radio and traditional music from the Kabul and Logar regions. The music was strictly entertainment in style. While the repertoire of the music program was similar to that during the mehmani in Dasht-e Islam, it was stylistically less complex.

Ahmad Ali sang mostly from memory, with the exception of the lyrics of one or two songs which he read from small pieces of paper. The first musical excerpt from this mehmani is a ghazal entitled "Badakhshan" which was the first song to be performed after the evening program was formally introduced. The movie clip begins with half of a dobaiti (quatrain) and may be possibly attributed to the eleventh century Persian poet Omar Khayyam. The second and main part of the song consisting of three dobaitis, was written by an anonymous local poet [view song badakhshan.mov; CD ROM 2].

**Badakhshan**

[half of a dobaiti]

Oh God! You broke my wine's ewer.
Oh God! You closed the door of pleasure to me.

[3 dobaitis]

From the source of the river in Taloqan and all the way to Angar
I have heard that my beloved has taken another lover/friend.
She did not take a friend like me.
Instead of taking a bunch of flowers,
she took a bundle of thorns!

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31 I have been told that the female members of households greatly enjoyed listening to the music of mehmanis from their adjoining quarters (Personal communication with female Badakhshi expatriate, 2001).
32 Religious Ismaili music is only performed during religious festivals and never associated with dancing.
If you become mean in the enclosure of loyalty,
If you suffer from the unkindness of your beloved,
You would never complain badly,
ever, even if you hurt so much.

You’ve come from Koh-e Bland Jora to Abab.
You’ve come to inquire about my wounded heart.
Put down the jug and sit down in front of me.
Regardless of your intention of wanting to collect water.

The lyrics in this Sufi song again evince a powerful connection to Badakhshan and its cultural heritage. A number of Sufi symbols such as *mai* (wine) and *ebriq* (clay ewer) may be understood to represent pleasure, leisure, or happiness. Such controversial terms would undoubtedly have contributed to orthodox Muslims’ dislike of Sufi poetry. While the word *nazanin* (delicate) implies the notion of ‘the beloved’, *yar* (beloved) may refer to the beloved of the poet’s beloved, suggesting that the poet’s lover may have fallen in love with someone else. Similarly, the terms *guldashte* (bunch of flowers) and *khahr* (thorn) are linked symbolically to the lover and the lover’s beloved. The metaphor of a bunch of flowers refers to love and happiness, but when combined with the negative symbols of weeds and thorns, symbolises that life is filled with happiness but also with sorrow.

Ahmad Ali’s “*Yar Yar Yar*” (‘Darling, Darling, Darling’) was another rendition of a Badakhshi ghazal, a colloquial love song, which was performed at the same mehmání.33 When Habib Shah noticed that I was filming the event, he quickly arranged for a vase of artificial flowers to be placed in front of the musicians.34 The only girl present in the room during this song was seated near the ghichak player and the community leader.35 Unlike the males in the audience, she did not express any obvious physical or emotional response to the music. This appearance of detachment from the performance event is consistent with the etiquette of an Afghan girl when in the company of males.

33 The pitch A served as the song’s tonal centre, whereas the modal execution of the tetrachords A, B♭, C, and D resembled the Arabic *maqam kurd*. In this piece, Ahmad Ali’s singing seemed simpler and less ornamented than in his previous songs. The audience, however, was even more engaged as evident in their clapping, laughter and general animation. Some members of the audience clapped a complex and syncopated beat to the ensemble’s main 6/8 rhythm, reflecting their familiarity with this musical tradition. The vocalisation of a number of symbols, such as *bulbul* (nightingale), *eshaq gashtan* (falling in love) and *marg* (death) again reiterates the Sufi influence in this song.

34 The vase can be seen in the right hand corner of the film excerpt.

35 At the beginning of the mehmání’s music program another young daughter of the community leader had also been present and was seated behind the girl who appears in this movie track.
Her presence at the party was permissible only because of her status as the daughter of the patron Habib Shah, and since she was within an acceptable age range, not having reached menarche [view track yaryaryar.mov; CD ROM 2].

*Yar Yar Yar*

[fārd]

Oh Nightingale! Bring the good news of the spring
and leave the bad news at the far end of the roof.

[rubāī]

Don’t scorn us because we are heart-broken.
We are ashes and we are sitting on the surface of the fire.

We haven’t killed anyone, nor have we hurt anyone.
This is our fault that we fall in love because of your beautiful face.

[matāi]

Now that I became despised, you left me.
Darling, darling, darling, I am sinful, sinful.
Darling, darling, darling, I am loyal, loyal.

You don’t know that I was joking.
Darling, darling, darling, I am sinful, sinful.
Darling, darling, darling, I am loyal, loyal.

Go and tell my beloved that Mafun is lonely,
Darling, darling, darling.

There are some days in which he is ill in Shatak [village name].
Darling, darling, darling.

The doctors have said that there is no treatment for me.
Darling, darling, darling.

Maybe the day of my death is drawing close.
Darling, darling, darling.

Now that I became despised, you left me.
Darling, darling, darling, I am sinful, sinful.
Darling, darling, darling, I am loyal, loyal.

About an hour and a half into the evening’s concert, Hafizullah, an audience member sitting next to the ghichak player, exchanged glances with Habib Shah, the community leader, who nodded. This nonverbal communication seems to have signified the transition from purely musical entertainment to a dance and music performance. A second exchange of glances followed, this time between Habib Shah and Hasan who seemed to seek the community leader’s permission to begin his performance. Again Habib Shah nodded and the tea cups and kerosene lamp in the centre of the room were immediately put
aside. Hasan passed his daf to Hafizullah, who appeared to act as the ensemble’s support musician, and in the meantime, the ensemble’s increase in the tempo of the music had been echoed by the clapping of the audience. Hasan, who seemed to be as excited to perform as the audience was to watch, then began his performance [view dance kateghanililmov; CD ROM 3]. 36

In his new role as a dancer, Hasan stood up and immediately removed his waistcoat. This may have signified to the audience that the room was ‘getting too warm’ or that in order to dance, he had to remove his restrictive coat which may have otherwise inhibited the quality of his performance. The removal of the waistcoat may also be seen to have metaphorically implied the casting off of the official deportment imposed by Sunni Islamic authorities in Badakhshan. Hasan’s part-undressing in a dimly lit room could also be understood to connote eroticism and to be suggestive of the controversial and even forbidden (haram) performances which would have typically occurred in the serais and chaikhanas along the main trade arteries. 37 In this instance, the audience immediately reacted by cheering and clapping; they knew what was to come.

Hasan’s improvised solo dance included spinning and wave-like movements which were generated by his whole body, especially his trunk. ‘Free-flowing’, ‘indirect’ and ‘sustained’ movements were executed in a coordinated, integrated and sometimes even exuberant fashion, giving his solo performance a fluid, yet confident air. 38 Large circling and turning motions took place in the tiny centre of the room and were accompanied by Hasan’s minimal locomotion of forward and sideways steps. This limited footwork was a direct result of the lack of space in the overcrowded khushkhana and was a common feature at the other mehmanis that I attended. In contrast, Hasan moved his upper limbs in a less restricted fashion, frequently performing horizontal movements in an ‘arc-like’ manner, and reaching into almost all directions of his kinesphere. Further, his opening and closing arm movements as well as the flexion and rotation of his trunk regularly facilitated shaping actions.

36 I was later told that Hasan was known in the community to be an excellent dancer and he was especially sought after to perform at weddings.
37 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Buz Dara, July 1999. For earlier comments on trade routes see Chapter Three.
38 To a degree, some ‘bound’ actions were also performed, especially during shoulder shrugging and sideways neck movements (3:12).
His anti-clockwise spinning may iconically evoke the whirling of Sufi dances. However, the majority of Sufis in Badakhshan are members of the Naqshbandiya order which strictly disapproves of music or dancing. While it is likely that Sufi practices would have been incorporated in Ismailism since early times (see Chapter Five) and may also have been performed in local *ziarats* during special occasions, in the political and historical context of my research, local Sufi dances had become rare and if they existed at all, it was most probably in the memories of some members of the community. During Hasan’s whirling and spinning movements, his clothing, a *shalwar qamiz*, almost seemed to resemble a type of Sufi garment but at another level, the costume-in-motion shared resemblances with a woman’s dress. This, when combined with Hasan’s mimetic actions, brought issues of effeminacy to the fore. A similar sartorial effect was observed in the historical performances in Wilgue that were discussed in Chapter Six. The spinning of the white-turbaned boy (see *historicalboys'dance.mov*) as well as the adult solo dancer (see *historicalsolodance.mov*) made their costumes fan out around them and it thus appeared as if they were wearing skirts. Indeed, the commonalities of movement repertoires and the performers’ particular use of their garments may indicate that Hasan’s solo dance drew on an historical, cultural performance genre.

Hasan’s lateral neck movements (1:49, 2:47), upward and downward shrugging of shoulders (3:51) and the shaking of his pectoral muscles – which appeared to function as ‘imaginary breasts’ – were iconically suggestive of female gestures. Expressed through ‘light’, gentle and ‘indirect’ movement qualities, these actions were evocative of an image of a female Indian classical dancer that audience members may have seen at an urban cinema during the later modern period or under the Communist regime, or in Indian movies broadcast on television during the latter era (see Baily 1988:142). Alternatively, this apparent resemblance to an Indian dancer may represent qualities of a local performance tradition. Indeed, these gestures were not only suggestive of an Indian woman, but also reminiscent of a *bache bazigar* (dancing boy) from the *bache bazi* genre in which boys mimic stereotypical female movements and are sometimes thought to engage in homosexual activities.

The *bache bazi* tradition invokes the controversial yet ambiguous issues of gender, maleness and sex. The fact that *bache bazi* was once a relatively

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39 In a Peircean context, this particular resemblance may be thought of as a rhematic icon.
common practice in Afghanistan is attested to by Ingeborg Baldauf who conducted field research on Uzbek folk songs in the provinces of Faryab, Jawzjan and Balkh in north-western Afghanistan in the 1970s up until mid-1978. She estimates that at that time, from one third to one half of the male Uzbek population was in some way exposed to or associated with this tradition (Baldauf 1988:9). Based on her observations of the dances of both girls and boys during her research, Baldauf clearly differentiates between the performance qualities of a dancing boy and those of a dancing girl, commenting that whereas dancing boys typically use their hands in an elaborate and extensive fashion and often intentionally appropriate their shirts as aprons, dancing women and girls tend to use their hands in a much less pronounced manner. Whilst I was initially hesitant to categorise any of the dances I observed as 'effeminate', my discussions with Baldauf confirmed that the movement characteristics of Hasan’s performance and those of Abdul Shakar’s at the mehmani at Dasht-e Islam (see kateghaniBahrk.mov), as well as the qualities of several other dancers whose performances will be discussed shortly, were similar to the dances of a bache bazigar. In her opinion, therefore, these dances were undeniably effeminate.

At face value, therefore, the effeminacy of these movements which I witnessed only during performances in the private domain may be seen to be making a joke of women. But concomitantly, these gestures may be indirectly related to the spiritual dimension of this dance genre, which seems to have in some form institutionalised the Sufi practice of shahid. As discussed in Chapter Five, through the act of nazar (gazing, contemplation), a shahid (witness) – a young, attractive and beardless male – implicitly comes to represent or embody the divine, and to thereby induce in the observer a state of religious ecstasy and love. The focus of this Sufi tradition was not the satisfaction of sensuality, and if sexual relations did arise at all, they were most probably associated with the final stage of the relationship between the bache baz and bache bazigar. Many local cultural practices in Badakhshan, such as the visiting of shrines as well as the performances of music and poetry evince elements of Sufi praxis. Likewise, the effeminate movements observed in a number of private dances in mehmanis may have been linked to bache bazi traditions which in themselves were historically embedded in a particular form of Sufi aesthetic practices.

40 Personal communication with Ingeborg Baldauf, Berlin, 2000.
41 In August 2000, I gave a seminar at the Zentralasien-Seminar, Humboldt University, Berlin, during which I presented some of my audiovisual footage.
The apparent effeminacy of Hasan's movements and their stylistic association with *bache bazigar* was further supported by the fact that audience members referred to the performance style as 'Kataghani', a genre commonly associated with *bache bazi* performances by young and occasionally cross-dressing boys. With the exception of this reference to the Kataghani genre, however, neither local nor expatriate Afghans were willing to otherwise comment on the nature of Hasan’s performance. Indeed, I found this avoidance of discussion of dance performances to be a typical pattern during my research. Yet certainly, the audience’s familiarity with this type of entertainment and their immense enjoyment of such performances was evident in their active participation in singing the song’s refrain and by making iconic onomatopoetic sounds. Moreover, throughout the performance, a strong interaction was evident between the dancer and his audience. Hasan constantly made eye contact with audience members and used his body to communicate by moving to and from various individuals. This was met with considerable laughter and clapping, the audience’s enjoyment exemplified in their facial and bodily expressions (1:24), which in turn seemed to lead Hasan to execute even more ecstatic whirling movements (1:25). The offering of money to the dancer situated the performance in direct relation to monetary value, which was particularly significant given that both dancing and money were among the rarest commodities in Afghanistan. Hasan, in turn, showered the musicians with the money – an action which may have pertained to his status and duties as a member of Ahmad Ali’s ensemble. At other times, however, Hasan danced with the money delicately held in his hands. This action is frequently seen in the wedding dances of the neighbouring countries of India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Iran, and as a semiotic possibility may be a symbol for ‘giving away’ but also ‘for being available to those who can afford it’.

The musical accompaniment to this improvised solo dance had an ambiguous rhythm. The second beat ‘pushed’ ahead a little, that is the beat was anticipated by the musicians and gave the sense of moving forward, thereby creating an ‘edge’ over the music. Such a rhythm is generally uncharacteristic

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42 Personal communication with member of Badakhshi elite, Buz Dara, July 1999.
43 The second half of the five beat rhythm gave the impression of being somewhat longer than the first half. This musical characteristic can also be observed in jazz music. When the pulse was performed as a triple metre, the pulse seemed to ‘swing’, thus further providing ambiguity in the rhythm. The second beat of some of the audience members’ clapping was usually accentuated. As a syncopated beat, it created the effect of providing additional ‘space’ in between the beats of the main rhythm. The pitch of a ‘straight’ A was chosen by Ahmad Ali as the *dambura*’s tonal centre, and seemed additionally to act as a drone in this song.
of Arab music and further emphasises the truly local music tradition of this performance. The audience also participated in the music soundscape by clapping an ‘offbeat’ as well as some syncopated rhythms. Vocally, Ahmad Ali’s singing included some vibrato, while he used a higher pitch when emphasising certain poetic phrases.

During Hasan’s solo dance, the atmosphere in Habib Shah’s khushkhana was almost at boiling point. Yet the climax of the evening was still to come when a second improvised solo dance was performed by Ahmad Ali, the damburanawaz and ensemble leader, as if to reassert his status as the district’s best dancer. At the conclusion of Hasan’s dance, Ahmad Ali immediately passed his dambura to Hafizullah, who not only replaced him as the lute player, but who later sang a local song about Buz Dara (2:03). As in Hasan’s performance, Ahmad Ali’s dance was characterised by a multitude of signs expressed through a range of gestures and movement routines which local participants referred to as ‘Kataghani’ [view dance kategani21km.mov; CD ROM 3]. During his improvised routine of loosely structured movement sequences, Ahmad Ali used his body in a fluid fashion.\(^{44}\) Compared with Hasan’s routine, his spins were less elaborate and not as sustained. Twice he shuffled with an almost military demeanour (0:33-0:39, 3:33-3:37) by flexing his right arm forward and holding his right wrist in a salute close to his forehead, whilst extending his left arm backwards so that his left wrist touched the small of his back. During this action, he minimally moved his neck from side to side, effecting a ‘homing in’ gesture that he directed to a particular audience member towards the end of the dance (3:33-3:37).\(^{45}\)

Unlike the dances discussed previously, Ahmad Ali’s performance incorporated an extensive mimetic component which gave rise to an erotic yet ludic air. Numerous gestures imitated a woman who appeared to be placing objects into her skirt (2:00), combing her hair in front of an mirror (2:08, 2:56), sensuously stroking and washing her face (2:12), and applying make-up and lipstick (2:20, 2:23). Ahmad Ali’s other suggestive gestures included his provocative sideways protrusion of his hips and simultaneous side-flexing of his trunk (2:33), and the lifting of his qamiz ‘like a skirt’ (1:54, 2:54). His

\(^{44}\) In order to emphasise certain expressive gestures, however, he sporadically held his trunk and neck in a fixed position. Throughout the dance, Ahmad Ali used curvy ‘directional’ movements, especially when performing wave-like arm actions during spinning and in-place dancing.

\(^{45}\) To emphasise these marching gestures further, he performed a range of ‘direct’ and ‘bound’ movements with his arms, legs and head (especially 3:33-3:37).
exaggerated lateral head and neck movements were at times executed with a touch of military precision (3:34), but at other times, these actions were performed humorously and were reminiscent of a female Indian classical dancer (3:05). 46 Several effeminate gestures hinted at bache bazi performances: the lowering of his body to the ground whilst shaking his ‘imaginary breasts’ (3:18), his backward trunk arches while placing both wrists at the sides of his body (3:12), the ecstatic swaying of his trunk whilst kneeling on the floor (3:19-3:21), and his apparently flirtatious eye contact with one member of the audience (2:14).

Many of these gestures and movements were catalysts for a range of effects. It seemed that Ahmad Ali was poking fun at the ‘stereotypical woman’, 47 whose idiosyncrasies and sensualities were in some way – through jokes or all male discussions – known to every man present. His ‘homing in’ on a particular member of the audience could be reflective of power relations such as patron/artisan, master/slave or in the specific genre of bache bazi, patron/client (bache baz/bache bazigar). Through the use of iconic mimicry, Ahmad Ali’s gestures also mocked social conventions, given that in most settings, this performance would have been strictly improper and profoundly unacceptable. But as a performer from a lower socio-economic background and marginalised sectarian community in Badakhshan, Ahmad Ali had some licence to allude to contentious issues albeit in a humorous manner. When understood as symbols, the iconic images of his gestures can be seen to provide a covert commentary about socio-critical issues in a religio-political environment when overt criticism was impossible and even dangerous.

Ahmad Ali’s performance of a salute with his right arm and hand evoked images of the military. Yet when juxtaposed with the placement of his left hand at the lower part of his spine and seemingly ‘effeminate’ neck movements, it created an incongruously humorous and clearly provocative effect. Since every Afghan had been exposed to the military in one way or another since 1978, Ahmad Ali was possibly drawing on his own personal experiences as a soldier. However, it seemed that he was also making fun of the actions of a disciplined soldier by explicitly connecting them with those of women. This mockery highlighted issues of discipline, aggression and war that have predominated in all provinces of Afghanistan and at the same time, the serious impact of ongoing civil war on the lives of most if not all Badakhshis was momentarily

47 Such a generic type is considered by Peirce to be a qualisign.
lightened through the playful, ironic combination of the normally opposed qualities of the military and the feminine.

Ahmad Ali later performed a prayer-like gesture (3:17) by clasping his hands together and flexing his head towards his chest. While this action may be understood as reminiscent of religious practices such as the veneration at Sufi shrines, given that it was performed in a non-religious and humorous context, it is possible that it was also derisive. Ahmad Ali’s subsequent swoon to the ground – a dramatic and effeminate end-marker – may have functioned as an index with the aim of ‘pulling’ himself back to the present, in this case to the entertaining event in which he, as a low-status musician, performed for mostly elite guests. As with Hasan’s solo dance, Ahmad Ali was also offered money and at one point (1:28), was even showered with a wad of Afghani notes by a soldier, one of the audience members. This bestowal of money may be interpreted in a number of ways. Most obviously, it can be read as an index of the soldier’s appreciation and enthusiasm for Ahmad Ali’s dance. It can also be seen as a sign of power and as related to the soldier’s wish to improve his status by impressing his peers in the audience, or in seeking to impress the dancer. Since the actual monetary value of the gift was extremely low (only 1000 Afghani notes were used), it may also have been ridiculing the dire economic state of the region. Certainly, his limited income as a United Front soldier would not have allowed him to impress the dancer financially, even if he had wanted to do so. Hence, he may have opted to use his virtually worthless money in a humorous fashion.

This dance consisted of two musical sections delineated by a non-structural pause in which a brief period of silence accompanied the stillness of the dancer (1:31) before leading into the next section of the dance. The first musical section was entirely instrumental and utilised a duple meter which accompanied the ‘straight’ clapping of the audience. The second section was performed with a more ambiguous rhythm, the second pulse of the duple meter giving the illusion that the second half of the metre was somewhat longer, whereas in fact it was not. The entertainment program of the mehmani did not conclude, however, with the dances of these two musicians, but continued well

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48 During that time, one US dollar was valued at approximately 100,000 Afghanis.
49 The clapping was largely a ‘straight’ rhythm on the first of the two pulses, but not on the second. Only those members in the audience who were familiar with this musical style and who may have been amateur musicians themselves, clapped on the anticipated second pulse.
50 Appearing almost a little too early, the second last beat seemed to be a sluggish rhythm of three beats (1 2 3).
into the early hours of the morning. It is important to note that as with the public entertainment in the other Ismaili village of Chahar Deh, only two dancers who seemed to be known as specialists, performed at this event, and not each participant as at the private Sunni events in Dasht-e Islam and Faizabad. As a result of the curfew which began at dusk throughout Badakhshan, all of the guests and performers present at the mehmani slept in the small khushkhana and in the morning, were served a traditional breakfast of nan (bread), shir chai and eggs.

Faizabad

The third mehmani which included a music and dance program took place in Faizabad in mid-May 1998 to celebrate Sayyid Rahman’s offer of a permanent position with an international organisation. Sayyid Rahman has been mentioned earlier in this chapter for his role as an amateur musician during the semi-public mela in Khushbad. In Faizabad, as elsewhere in Badakhshan and Afghanistan, the impoverished local economy and provincial administration had meant that few job opportunities existed for skilled Afghans. This appointment was therefore an excellent reason to celebrate with a major mehmani. Since it is impossible to hire indoor venues in Faizabad, he asked his co-residents, two relatives and their extended families, to vacate the two rooms they occupied in his small house for the duration of the party.

Sayyid Rahman invited twenty male guests from his close circle of friends and relatives, most of whom were ethnic Sunni Tajik Badakhshi like himself, but some were Sunni Pushtun Badakhshis and others Sunni Pushtuns from neighbouring provinces. Many guests were employed at international aid organisations; none were at that time affiliated with any of the Islamist parties. Sayyid Rahman had also invited Nasrullah Sherzad, a Tajik friend and amateur zirbaghali player, to assist him with the after-dinner entertainment. With the exception of one participant who was educated at a state-controlled religious institution, all others had been secularly-educated at either secondary and/or tertiary level. Although the host of the mehmani, Sayyid Rahman was also the

51 The dinner on this occasion was prepared by the women of the household whom I neither saw nor heard. The feast consisted of Kabuli pilaw, a long grain rice dish cooked with onions, shortening and boiled meat, sultanas and pistachios, kofta (ground meat dish) and kebabs. This was accompanied by a yoghurt and fried eggplant dish, and sabzi (a spinach and yoghurt dish), as well as servings of the common snacks of raisins, pistachios and noql.
evening's primary performer, singing local songs and contemporary cover versions by expatriate musicians, whilst accompanying himself on a Casio keyboard that was connected to an old truck battery.\textsuperscript{52} In addition to his supporting role as percussionist and backing vocalist, Nasrullah Sherzad performed several songs alone.

After a series of introductory songs, a suitable atmosphere for the dance program seemed to have been established. Indeed, dancing proved to be the central feature of this mehmani. Each guest was required to perform a solo dance to the accompaniment of the musicians and the clapping of the other guests. The dance styles ranged from traditional improvised solo dances, not unlike the ones seen during the mela in Khushbad, to what appeared to be a combination of traditional and modern influences performed in an improvised style. I have selected two dances for discussion: the first is a representation of a commonly performed and well accomplished Badakhshi solo dance, and the second dance is an excellent example of the influence of 'modernity' and Western culture upon local dance traditions. The zirbaghalinawaz Nasrullah Sherzad performed the first of the two improvised solo dances. When it was his turn to dance, Wali Jan, another guest, took over the drumming [view dance kateghaniFzb.mov; CD ROM 2].

Nasrullah Sherzah danced in a Kataghan style, not unlike Ahmad Ali's solo dance at the mehmani in Buz Dara. His performance consisted of four interconnected sections which shared stylistic similarities with the public dances at Munjan and Chahar Deh, as well as with the private dances at Buz Dara and Dasht-e Islam. The musical accompaniment was supplied by the keyboard player Sayyid Rahman and the percussionist Wali Jan who performed a 'straight' triple rhythm (6/8) as well as a more ambiguous duple metre (2/4).\textsuperscript{53} The first section of the performance seemed to act as an introduction (0:00-0:58) to establish an appropriate mood during which Nasrullah Sherzad executed relatively sustained movements of slow forward shuffling, and inward and outward rotations of his palms. An increase in tempo marked the beginning of the second section (1:00) when the dancer began to rotate and flex his trunk. It was in this section that he performed several 'effeminate' gestures: flirtatiously 'gazing' into the distance, brushing his hair (1:28), and provocatively moving his hips and head from side-to-side (1:40). The playful

\textsuperscript{52} Sayyid Rahman's favourite expatriate musician was Farhad Darya.

\textsuperscript{53} The triple metre's first beat was accented (1 2 3 4 5 6). As with the performance at the Khushbad picnic, Sayyid Rahman again used a Phyrgian scale with E as the key note.
nature of these gestures was confirmed by Nasrullah Sherzad’s humorous expression. The third section in which the performer mostly danced in place was accompanied solely by the percussionist’s drumming that ranged from a duple to a triple meter (1:52-2:20). In the final section of this solo dance (2:21), the keyboard player Sayyid Rahman rejoined the percussionist. Nasrullah Sherzad concluded his dance with an anti-clockwise spin (2:42) and acknowledged Sayyid Rahman, the patron of the mehmani and one of the musicians, by bowing forwards and bringing his right hand towards his heart. In spite of the use of a battery-operated Casio keyboard as the prime musical accompaniment and which was clearly an index of ‘modernity’ and hence, the “commodification of imported cultural property” (Neuenfeldt 1998), most of Nasrullah Sherzad’s movements were performed in a traditional Badakhshi style. His iconic mimicking of a woman functioned similarly to the previous dances by Hasan and Ahmad Ali in Buz Dara and seemed again to be a style that was familiar to the audience.

As is customary during intimate mehmanis, the last dance of the evening was performed by the host, Sayyid Rahman [view dance modernsoledance.mov; CD ROM 2]. To accompany his dance, he selected a pre-programmed tune on his Casio keyboard, a medley of tunes that centred around the Western melody of ‘Jingle Bells’. To a researcher of European origin, this melody naturally evoked Christmas in a particularly kitsch form, but it was unlikely that these associations existed for Sayyid Rahman and his guests. Indeed, it is more likely that they equated these tunes with the positive implications and benefits of modernity. The audience was obviously extremely impressed with the use of this ‘electronic’ instrument and its ‘modern’ music, which starkly contrasted the Afghan music performed throughout the rest of the evening. As in all of the aesthetic performances, although perhaps for different reasons, the audience members responded by clapping in rhythm and by laughing at Sayyid Rahman’s ‘modern’ performance.

In contrast to the other solo dances at this event, and for that matter the dances previously discussed in this chapter, Sayyid Rahman’s performance was characterised by a juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary dance styles and may thus be understood as a type of ‘bricolage’. While the other dances I

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54 His general movement characteristics were executed by free-flowing and arc-like directional movements, interspersed with some occasional bound and direct actions.

55 The term bricolage was coined by the structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) and serves as a descriptive tool “when no other means is available” (Payne 1996:79). Drawing
observed in Badakhshan tended to share some common stylistic features such as extended wrists and rotating palms, spinning and limited travel across the dance space, this solo performance was more individual and included a number of improvised themes whose exact influences are unclear. Sayyid Rahman laughed during most of his dance; he was also clearly having fun (1:22). His mimicking of an imaginary ‘air lute’ player may be interpreted as an acting out of the film image of a ‘pop star’ in modern Western society (1:52). The inclusion of such elements in his performance may be understood as an indexing of his time at university in one of Afghanistan’s cities before ultra-conservative Islamic rule took hold. In fact, this dance served as a medium through which Sayyid Rahman could express his body in a less restricted or more ‘liberated’ way and which was not so removed from the nature of an improvised solo dance that could be safely performed in a Western or liberal Muslim society. The embodiment of military signs in an almost choreographed marching routine (0:57-1:06) may have related to Sayyid Rahman’s time as a government soldier for the Communist regime during the civil war with the mujahideen. These movement qualities seemed to indicate that even in a playful context, war was never far away. Indeed, the great sense of enjoyment that was clearly experienced by the dancers and audiences in all of the performances may be understood as reflecting their desire and need to have fun and to detach momentarily from the harsh realities and struggles of everyday life: civil war, drought, famine, natural disasters, unemployment, and isolation from the global community, in addition to a general sense of hopelessness about the future. This final dance did not indicate the end of the mehmani as the celebrations continued with solo and group singing of popular Afghan songs. Again, due to the curfew, everyone remained overnight in Sayyid Rahman’s residence and the mehmani finally concluded with breakfast the following morning.

on Anthony Shay’s usage of the term (1999:35), I have found this expression useful in describing a dance that appears “outside of tradition” to create a new dance that is still based on an existing tradition.

56 Many body parts were used in Sayyid Rahman’s dance which enabled him frequently to change the shape of his torso. He favoured a spatial path which included many indirect and multi-focussed movements and incorporated combinations of arc-like and spoke-like directional actions. In some of his gestures, Sayyid Rahman skilfully elongated his body to the limit of his kinesphere.
Summation of Performance Events in Badakhshan

From the analyses of cultural practices in Chapters Six and Seven, it has become clear that a diversity of personal to communal, local to regional, ethnic to trans-ethnic, sectarian to pan-Islamic, and political to socio-cultural themes and concerns, has been expressed in the range of religious and non-religious performances I observed in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999. In particular, it seems that cultural performances manifested a multiplicity of cultural influences and social identities whilst remaining embedded in Afghanistan's central cultural influence of Islam.

In Afghanistan in the late 1990s, tensions arising from the escalating convergence of Islamic and Afghan identities were publicly contested in the political arena – for example the Taliban versus the United Front, extremist versus moderate Islamists, ulama versus Islamists – and in Badakhshan, were manifested in various interpretations and perceptions of what constitutes a 'good Muslim'. The majority of Badakhshis follow Hanafi Sunni Islam and as a consequence, strictly adhere to Islam's normative texts. From 1992, ultra-conservative Badakhshis who were influenced by Indian/Pakistani reformist movements (Deoband, Ahl-e Hadith) and/or Arabian Wahhabism, tended to be either strictly or loosely aligned with the more conservative or radical Islamist parties such as Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, Sayyaf's Ittehad-e Islami or even the Jamiat-e Islami, and abided by extremist interpretations of cultural performances. Other Badakhshis who were more moderate and even relatively liberal Sunnis, while privately espousing a synthesis of normative Islam with more local practices such as visiting Sufi shrines, celebrating nowruz, participating in buzkashi, and dancing at weddings and mehmanis, publicly conformed to the prevailing standards of conservative Islamic behaviour. In contrast, the minority Ismailis in the province continued to practise a more syncretic form of Islam that incorporated elements of local traditions and Sufism. These varying interpretations and loyalties meant that there was always the potential for overt tensions both within and between sectarian and ethnic groups.

Frictions between Islamic and Afghan, especially regional and more local identities were clearly mirrored in the non-religious practices that were sanctioned by the religious and political authorities in Badakhshan. Buzkashi, for example, was perceived by the majority of Badakhshan's population to be a sport unique to northern Afghanistan. The fact that it is seen to be a marker of northern Afghan identity may have been one of the reasons why, in
contradistinction to the Pushtun Taliban's prohibition of this sport, it continued to be condoned throughout Badakhshan, even though it is not an Islamic practice. In this sense, the performance of *buzkashi* potentially strengthened the United Front alliance within the province and implicitly contributed to anti-Taliban sentiment. Perhaps for similar reasons, that is not only because of the evidence of its pre-Islamic origins, but its explicit connection with a northern non-Pushtun identity, the Taliban banned *buzkashi*. Clearly, this action was also a means of breaking down regional identities and uniting all Afghans under their notion of Islamic identity, which increasingly replicated the culture promoted by extremist Arabs who were linked to international terrorist organisations such as bin Laden's al Qaeda network.

Historically, the legitimacy of cultural practices in Afghanistan depended upon the interpretations propounded by the *ulema* or village mullah. Since the inauguration of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, political and military leaders have also espoused their own interpretations of Islamic morality which progressively became more conservative in response to the rise of the Taliban. Although Badakhshan's leadership had not declared any official edicts with respect to non-religious performances, I was told by a number of informants that such practices were denounced by some *ulema* through their weekly *joma* sermons. While religious practices are clearly defined by Islamic conventions, non-religious practices tend to be less rule-bound, their meanings frequently ambiguous and hence more open to interpretation. My analysis of liminal practices such as the *namaz-e id* demonstrated that they were marked by orthopraxy and a sense of restraint and gravity which noticeably contrasted with the more liminoid activities of sport, music and dance that were characterised by qualities of exuberance, amusement and even provocation, and tended to be more polysemous. Yet further examination of Badakhshan's cultural performances indicates that they are not readily demarcated into religious or non-religious, but instead exist on a continuum of degrees of 'being Islamic'. This hypothesis finds confirmation in the fact firstly that non-religious performances such as sport were condoned by both Sunni and Ismaili authorities. I suggest that sport was approved by Badakhshan's religio-political leadership since it satisfied the Hanafi Islamic criteria of public entertainment. Moreover, the sporting contests and also the prize-shooting and merry-go-rounds provided for the children's amusement at the *nowruz* fair in Faizabad, seemed to manifest aggressive and competitive characteristics that after decades of civil war, had become predominant features of public life. Further, both *buzkashi* and *kushti giri* were overtly linked with political allegiances and agendas and hence directly reflected the pervasive influence of military
commanders upon all aspects of public social life. The existence of the religious/non-religious continuum is also attested to by the inclusion of instrumental and vocal music in Ismaili religious praxis. Significantly, the fluid positioning of this cultural practice on the continuum of public/private is evident in its traditionally public performance among Ismailis, its concealment from Sunnis who would not regard this practice as Islamic, and the semi-public performance that was organised during my visit to Chashma Bozurg. Hence, cultural practices are not always easily and readily categorised as religious or non-religious or relatedly, as halal or haram.

The positioning of cultural performances along the continuum of public to private was directly related to the specific religious and political contexts in which these events arose. In Badakhshan this was manifested by the fact that commanders of the United Front officially condoned the performance of both religious and sporting practices. Yet as a consequence of the recurrent debates about the legalities of aesthetic practices in Islamic societies and due to the general state of cultural confusion that had arisen subsequent to Afghanistan’s ongoing political crisis and the rise of the Taliban, non-religious aesthetic practices remained the most controversial cultural performances in Badakhshan. With the exception of the few public and semi-public events, all aesthetic performances in 1998 and 1999 were contingent upon the patronage of more moderate or liberal political and military leaders and if this was not obtainable, they were conducted in a clandestine fashion to ensure they did not attract the attention of orthodox citizens or conservative Islamist authorities. Indeed, it was only within the private domain that Badakhshis could in any way allude to more moderate ideas of Islam. Even the relatively more public performances – that of Sharif in Buz Dara and those during the mela in Khushbad – reflected the organisers’ intentions to construct their environments in such a way as to optimise privacy. Only under such circumstances could the traditional cultural practices of music and dance be safely performed. Significantly, private parties that were organised and attended by powerful and politically influential members of the community commonly involved the engagement of musicians who were typically drawn from artisan groups, but whose marginal positioning allowed them to express controversial political and social commentaries that in other contexts would be deemed inappropriate. In contrast, if a mehmani was an informal and less political gathering of friends and relatives, the emphasis of the music and dancing in which all participants

57 Sunni Islam explicitly prohibits the use of musical instruments in association with religious praxis.
engaged, was chiefly and simply to have fun. With the exception of religious festivals, therefore, *mehmanis* which were concealed, exclusive and restricted to invited guests only, must be understood as the most marked special events in Badakhshan. Each private aesthetic performance thus represented one of the most secretive and protected forms of Badakhshan’s cultural heritage.

All of the religious and non-religious cultural performances that have been discussed in this and the preceding chapter may be understood as signs of local Badakhshi culture. Musical performances signalled a number of possible agendas: religious (Sufi, religious Ismaili), nationalist and entertainment. The latter genre, in particular, was distinguished by musical and lyrical signs that evinced a diversity of local, trans-regional, multi-sectarian, and multi-ethnic associations. This was best exemplified with some of the entertainment music in the Ismaili region of Buz Dara where references to Islam, Nasir Khusraw and locality were made and local instruments used such as the Pamiri *rubab*, an instrument only performed in Afghanistan by Badakhshi Ismailis. The performances in the Sunni regions of Dasht-e Islam and Bagh-e Zard also incorporated songs whose lyrics referred to Islam, locality and history. Likewise, the Kateghani solo dances that were performed in Dasht-e Islam, Buz Dara and Faizabad may also be linked as semiotic possibilities to Sufism and the wider Badakhshan region as they seemed to be reflective of a northern Afghan performance genre.

I suggest that this blending of qualities and origins contributed to the categorisation of non-religious aesthetic practices as ‘un-Islamic’. Yet there is clear evidence that societal approval or prohibition of aesthetic performances was not uniform, but variable and contested. ‘Simple’ instrumental music such as a flute performance was generally regarded as an innocent leisure activity that would not lead to immoral activities, and hence it was seen to be acceptable. In contrast, ensemble music involving the use of lutes, a harmonium and percussion and typically characterised by more complex musical qualities (scales, timbre, rhythms, tempo) was often considered to be more questionable, especially if the lyrics were somewhat ambiguous or if the performance could in any way be linked to illicit or immoral activities.

In comparison with the tacit prohibition of aesthetic practices espoused by the majority of Badakhshan’s ruling Sunni elite, the participation of Ismaili religious leaders as musicians in Chahar Deh and Chashma Bozurg evinced their regard for music as an important cultural medium. This was further confirmed when a public music and dance performance was organised by
Enayatullah Qurban, Chahar Deh’s *khalifa* and village leader. The absence of Sunni Tajik commanders and their armed soldiers in the Ismaili villages of Chashma Bozurg and Chahar Deh, and the relative isolation of these villages from the district centre of Buz Dara, meant that aesthetic practices could potentially be performed in a less constrained fashion since they were less affected by Badakhshan’s political situation. Furthermore, the tolerance of aesthetic entertainment evident in 1998 and 1999 in the wider and mostly Ismaili-inhabited Buz Dara region, stood in stark contrast to other, mostly Sunni settlements in Badakhshan where religio-political leaders had strictly prohibited any form of non-religious aesthetic expression and where music had not been publicly performed since the beginning of Islamic governance in 1992.

In spite of the rarity of aesthetic practices in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999, the music examples presented in this and the previous chapter highlight the thematic and stylistic diversity of extant performances: a religious *qasida* in Chashma Bozurg (*rawan.mov*), a nationalistic song in Baz Dura (*anthem.mov*), a *falak* in Faizabad (*localtune.mov*), *ghazals* with local lyrics in Buz Dara and Dasht-e Islam (for example, *advice.mov*, *badakhshan.mov*, *yaryaryar.mov*, and *homeland.mov*), songs with Sufi content in Buz Dara and Bagh-e Zard (for example, *shams.mov* and *bache.mov*), songs such as “Shish Kebab” (*kateghaniBahrk.mov*) that evinced Arabic influences, and even songs based on Western music (*modernsolodance.mov*) were performed. The musical structure and lyrical content of the songs mostly pertained to Badakhshan, but occasionally also to the wider region of Kataghan. Two of the local songs from Buz Dara were characterised by their humour (see *donkey.mov*) and even some sexually provocative comments (see *husband&wife.mov*), and demonstrated similarities with the genres of storytelling.

While the dances I recorded were mostly improvised solo dances and thus were stylistically less diverse than the music, they ranged from traditional (for example, *localsolodance(od)lkm.mov*), to regional (for example, *kateghaniBahrk.mov*), to national (*attan(od)Fzb.mov*), to modern (*modernsolodance.mov*), and socio-critical performances (*kateghani2lkkm.mov*). Comparison of the dances I witnessed in 1998 and 1999 with those evident in historical footage reveals a general deterioration in stylistic and expressive qualities. This change was less marked in the more remote areas of Badakhshan such as the Ismaili village of Chahar Deh where
less stringent restrictions by Sunni Islamists meant that aesthetic performances continued to closely resemble those recorded in the early 1960s.

The questionable origins, nature and meanings of dancing meant that it was always considered by conservative Sunni Badakhshi Islamist and Islamic commanders and generally orthodox community members to be an un-Islamic (haram) activity. However, secularly-educated as well as more traditionally inclined Badakhshis who were not associated with any of the Islamist parties would listen to music and if the opportunity arose, even dance. It would therefore seem likely that the classification of dance as haram is at least in part related to the use of the body as a medium for emotional and sensuous expression, as well as its inherent potential to indirectly reflect or comment upon a range of socio-cultural and political issues. In Badakhshan, the dance performances I observed were generally characterised by light, gentle and fluid effort qualities which notably contrasted the strong, direct and aggressive elements of sport. Dancing was frequently marked by playful, sensual, even erotic, and political themes. Further, the affective qualities of performances were commonly reflective of local cultural heritage and identity although the potential for change was demonstrated by the ready inclusion of modern instruments and improvised dancing styles in the performances at the mehmani in Faizabad.

In contrast to the expression of Badakhshi personhood during religious rituals and non-religious sport, the dancing body often revealed more intimate information about gender (both the feminine and the masculine) and sexuality, as well as Sufism, orthodox Islam, and politics – issues which were rarely publicly acknowledged in Badakhshan's highly conformist society. In fact, dance represented a means by which controversial socio-critical comments and risqué gestures could be expressed both seriously and playfully in an arena of secrecy. In turn, the dancer's "creative freedom", his performance style and the nature of the setting may have permitted the audience a degree of "interpretative licence" (Jackson 1983:336) and thus facilitated a polysemous effect.

While there may be an historical link between Sufism and the effeminate gestures evident in some of the improvised solo dances, the sensitivity of both Sufism and the bache bazi tradition rendered discussions with Badakhshi informants impossible. Since these movements were entirely extra-linguistic signs, they were clothed in ambiguity and their meanings thus remained indeterminate to both performer and audience. One may hypothesise that such
dances possibly conveyed the message of "what it is to be" a woman (Jackson 1983:338). Yet while performers appropriated female virtue and stereotypical qualities, they exaggerated them, thus making them humorous and somewhat ridiculous. Indeed, many possible interpretations exist for this playful inversion of the public demeanour characteristic of Afghan men. Certainly, a pragmatic understanding of these ambiguous performances is situational and in many respects, the meaning of a particular performance may be felt primarily through embodiment when it is "experienced bodily before it is apprehended in the mind" (Jackson 1983:338). From my observations at these performances, although the dancers' mimetic movement qualities were at all times extremely ambiguous, they nonetheless evoked a highly emotive response in their respective audiences. The embodied articulation of these male dancers with their male audiences thus produced a shared mockery of what they imagined to be women's everyday practices, despite the fact that this domain was usually inaccessible and concealed from them.

The extant performances discussed in this thesis confirm the desire and indeed the determination of many local communities to maintain and safeguard their local traditions, in spite of prevailing prohibitions on non-religious practices. I have found Victor Turner's terms of liminal and liminoid to be particularly useful in explicating the differences between haram and halal performances in Badakhshan. Liminal performances whose clear symbols and ritual practices have been prescribed by Islam's normative texts are obligatory to any society that is founded on Islam and are understood as contributing to effective social functioning. Consequently, these cultural performances continued without question in Badakhshan. In contrast, more liminoid performances tend to be more creative and as Turner (1974:86) suggests, they

are often parts of social critiques or even revolutionary manifestos—books, plays, paintings, films, etc., exposing the injustices, inefficiencies, and immoralities of the mainstream economic and political structures and organizations.

These practices, in particular dance, largely signified iconically (through resemblance) and indexically (through contiguity), but not through language and were thus more difficult to situate with respect to legality. Moreover, these polysemous embodied performances had the potential to be political, to express social critiques and to challenge the status quo. The performances of double-edged gestures such as the mimicking of women or soldiers were also indicative of the interrelationship of homo-social practices (the military, Sufism and bache bazi traditions) that were especially salient in Badakhshan. It was these liminoid practices in 1998 and 1999 which were mostly and somewhat arbitrarily classified as un-Islamic.
Conclusion

Without tradition we cannot live.
(Habib Shah, Ismaili community leader, Badakhshan, 1998).

As you see, this is a destroyed building...
And what these people wanted to show was that art, music and culture
will not die in this country and nobody can kill them.
(Raheen Makhdoom, Afghanistan’s Minister of Culture and Information,
commenting after the opening of the first post-Taliban theatre play in Kabul in AP
2002).

With its focus on cultural performances in Badakhshan, this interdisciplinary
investigation has provided unique insights into the province’s social, cultural
and political relationships during the Taliban era (1996-2001). Indeed, the
central premise of this thesis is that Badakhshan’s culture is inextricable from
its political and religious contexts. Clearly, all cultural practices are deeply
embedded in both local traditions and Islam, reflecting the influences of Hanafi
Sunny Islam, Naqshbandi Sufism and Sevenner Shiite Nizari Ismailism. While
the more moderate and predominant Hanafi jurisprudence had fostered a
general tolerance of non-religious practices during previous political regimes,
with the establishment of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in 1992, a strict
Islamic code of conduct was propounded by elements within the Islamist
government as an important obligation for all Afghans. This conservativism
was largely an outcome of the political alliance between Islamic and Islamist
mujahideen groups who having successfully defeated the Soviet-backed
Communist regime, saw Islam as the source of their triumph over foreign invasion.

Nevertheless, conflicting religious and political ideologies were evident from the outset of Rabbani’s Presidency, with varying interpretations of Sharia law and differing ideas of the structure of an Islamic state. While most political-military leaders, who were nominally loyal to the Rabbani government and later aligned with the United Front, espoused a relatively moderate form of Hanafi Islam, a number of allied commanders imposed their own strict interpretations of Sharia law in the territories under their control. The Wahhabi-influenced Sayyaf, for example, promoted a vision of an ultra-conservative Islamist state that was strongly anti-Shiite in sentiment. Similarly, the Rabbani government’s brief rapprochement with Hekmatyar in 1996 indicates the degree to which the Islamic State of Afghanistan was forced to accommodate pivotal political figures, regardless of their radical tendencies, in order to ensure their continued support for the nascent Islamist administration. Significantly, during his short-lived Prime Ministership, Hekmatyar promulgated extremist Islamic doctrines that led to the prohibition of all aesthetic practices that were not clearly associated with Islam.

Moreover, the emergence of the Taliban and their espousal of allegedly ‘puritan’ Islam compelled the comparatively more moderate Rabbani government to incorporate similar stringent Islamic guidelines that would continue to legitimise its leadership of an Islamist Afghan state. Again, the Rabbani government in Badakhshan was heavily dependent upon the allegiances of often-conservative individual commanders to maintain an effective anti-Taliban resistance. Indeed, some of these allies were extremist Muslims who, like the Taliban, had been influenced by the radical reformist ideologies of Arabian Wahhabism and Indian Deobandism. In addition, although Hekmatyar’s political influence at a national level had ceased with the Taliban’s increasing domination from 1996, he continued to muster considerable support among local Badakhshi commanders from mostly Uzbek, Pushtun and Baluch communities. In this context of escalating orthodoxy and tenuous political alliances, any perceived challenge to the practice of conservative Islam represented a threat to the integrity and stability of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. As a consequence and in light of the historical debates concerning the legality of non-religious performances in Islamic societies, those cultural practices that were more ambiguous in meaning became particularly controversial and were therefore either explicitly banned or, at the very least, significantly subdued in the territories of ultra-
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conservative commanders. In noticeable contrast to the Taliban, however, the ruling authorities of Badakhshan condoned non-religious commemorative events such as *nowruz* and *jeshen* as well as sports such as *buzkashi* which had traditionally served as a marker of Badakhshan's cultural heritage. Unlike the proscribed performances of music and dance, these activities were deemed to be appropriate cultural practices in the conservative Islamic society of Badakhshan in the late 1990s. In comparison, aesthetic practices were only performed publicly in some smaller, rural, isolated, and strategically less significant settlements in the province.

**Contested Identities**

The nature and legality of cultural performances in Afghanistan have been subject to the marked shifts in political and religious ideologies of the last three decades. Foreign cultural intervention in Afghanistan during this time most clearly dates from the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1978-1989. Under this regime, religious practices were not encouraged, but instead non-religious entertainment and aesthetic practices were fostered as a means of communicating Soviet ideals. Yet, reminiscent of Amanullah’s modernisation ideals of the 1920s, the secularly educated Communist elite overlooked the significant interplay between religion and politics in Afghanistan. The involvement of extremist Wahhabi-influenced Arabs such as the Saudi bin Laden and his al Qaeda terrorist organisation in Afghanistan, while initially less overt, was underpinned by a missionary zeal which sought to promote and cement Arabian Wahhabi principles into Afghan culture and perhaps even to expand the Wahhabi colonies in non-Arab Asia. Not surprisingly, these Arab ideas of culture clashed with Afghan traditions, contributing to the state of cultural confusion in Afghanistan. Unlike the Soviets, the Taliban were aware of the complex nexus between Afghan culture, Sufism and local traditions and on this basis, attempted radically to eliminate cultural practices that did not conform to orthodox Islam. Similarly, in Badakhshan, non-Tajik Badakhshis in particular, such as extremist Uzbeks and Pushtuns who had been associated with ultra-conservative *madrassas* funded by Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, aligned themselves with Arabian and Indian forms of Islamism, which in turn led to the strict censorship of aesthetic practices in the territories held by these extremist commanders.

Drawing extensively on my fieldwork in Badakhshan in 1998 and 1999, I have argued in this thesis that cultural performances during the Taliban era remained
central to the expression of Badakhshi cultural identity and were anchored in both collective and individual experiences of the contemporary political and religious context. At that time, uncertainties about legitimate cultural heritage stemmed from a state of general uncertainty about the appropriateness of traditional Afghan practices in a conservative Islamic society. The fact that some non-Islamic practices were condoned while others were clearly prohibited brings to light the existence of tensions between Afghan and Islamic identities in Badakhshan as well as in the larger context of Afghanistan.

Yet Islamic and Afghan identities are intricately interwoven in Badakhshan's cultural heritage. Both the contexts and the content of performances testify to the diversity of social, religious and political identities in Badakhshan. In many cases, the performance events comprised members of a variety of ethnic, regional, sectarian, and political groups. This was particularly evident at the buzkashi tournament in Faizabad. Similarly, and in spite of the fact that Badakhshan has historically been an isolated and autonomous territory, the variety of songs performed at the outdoor festival exemplified and accentuated Afghanistan's multi-ethnic cultural heritage and identity. During the jeshen festival, sixty per cent of the songs were local and of the remaining songs, forty per cent were from other ethnic regions of Afghan provinces, mainly northern Afghanistan but also from Logar and Kabul. In addition, the performance of a Pushtun atan by predominantly non-Pushtun participants at a mela, signified their acknowledgment of this dance as a national symbol, and indicated their positioning of Badakhshan within the larger multi-ethnic society of Afghanistan. Moreover, there was a palpable trend among the younger, secularly-educated population to incorporate cultural practices that were perceived to be 'modern' and 'Western' into local performance traditions, as evinced by the use of the Casio keyboard and the dancing to the tune of 'Jingle Bells'. This inclination not only attested to the dynamism of Badakhshi culture, but perhaps also suggested that this social group looked beyond the constraints of its local and national contexts for inspiration and opportunities that were perceived to accompany modernisation.

The Politics of Performance

While the homogeneous and obligatory religious practices such as the id prayers were purely sacred, formal and restrained in nature and style, popular Afghan cultural practices such as music and dance were an amalgam of Islamic and local cultural traditions and although often expressing an element of 'fun',
also commonly provided some form of socio-critical commentary. Traditionally, in formal settings, music and dance were provided by professional (maslaki and kesbi) performers with a generally low social status and who have therefore been relatively ‘powerless’ in the arena of politics. This social positioning, however, in many cases provided performers with some licence to portray a “critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant” (Scott 1990:xii).

While the role of performers was largely reduced during the Rabbani Presidency, if they were hired to provide entertainment, then they were still at liberty to act in ways that would otherwise have been deemed improper or contentious. The polysemic of aesthetic performances and their frequent political, religious and social allusions, meant that there was always the possibility for them to be interpreted as politically or morally negative and for performers to be held accountable for ‘subversive’, ‘immoral’ or ‘politically provocative’ actions. If, for example, a musician decided to sing a song that was not politically ‘correct’ or which contained messages that may have been perceived as ‘un-Islamic’, or if the dancer’s expression became ‘too’ provocative or sensual, such actions could easily have endangered their lives. In the political context of my research, it was thus no longer possible for musicians and dancers to make a living from performing. In fact, every performer I interviewed in Badakhshan was virtually completely occupied with work as a subsistence farmer on private or leased land.

Given the risks inherent in the performance of non-religious entertainment, why then did some men in positions of authority condone them? In the case of the music and dance performances that were organised by the Ismaili leader in Buz Dara, for example, the answer has possibly to do with the exercise of power by local leaders. Control of an aesthetic performance may have represented control of a social resource and another’s physicality, and consequently signified a leader’s authority. The Ismaili leader, for example, in standing beyond the official censorship imposed by Sunni commanders and governors, thereby asserted a measure of autonomy and possibly the licence to permit and/or engage in other practices that did not conform to religious ideologies propounded by authorities at that time. This clearly confirms the political potential of cultural performances and their strategic manipulation by influential, authoritative figures to various and individual ends.

In a society in which signs and symbols of conflict were very much in evidence in everyday life, performances that were embedded in entertainment and
leisure had particular significance, embodying vital forms of social knowledge that have been integral to the maintenance of local identity. In accordance with the demands of each situation, Badakhshis had learned to assume different identities. The conservatism demanded by many mullahs and conservative authorities was met mostly with public conformity. Yet, in the absence of direct surveillance, the local population then had some latitude to engage in cultural practices, although usually in a restricted, concealed and private domain. Significantly, in spite of the restrictive environment for aesthetic performances within the groundswell of ultra-conservative Islam, dance and music performances were performed by some traditional as well as more liberal Badakhshis, although mostly surreptitiously and not without individuals taking considerable risks. In the more secluded environments of semi-public and private arenas, Badakhshis were in a position occasionally to adopt a more moderate Islamic code that was more in line with traditional cultural expression that had been common during previous political regimes such as that of King Zahir Shah, President Mohammad Daoud and the Communist era. However, the persistence of these performance traditions under the oppressive conditions of Islamic orthodoxy, clearly demonstrates the value that individuals attributed to their cultural heritage.

**Contemporary Situation**

Since this study was first conceived, tremendous political changes have taken place in Afghanistan. In 1997, many Afghans were still coming to terms with the northern retreat of the Rabbani government from Kabul and the expanding rule of the extremist Taliban militia. In the period from 1998 to 1999, I personally observed how the political consolidation of the Taliban throughout Afghanistan led to an intensification of conservative Islamic expression among the general population of Badakhshan, which at that time served as the seat of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The promulgation of conservative Sharia law by the Rabbani government and allied commanders meant that non-Islamic performances were restricted and all aesthetic practices were censored.

By November 2001, the United Front through the assistance of US-led forces had defeated the Taliban. Shortly after, following the UN-sanctioned ‘Bonn Talks’ which concluded on 5 December 2001, a broad-based, multi-ethnic and pro-Western Interim Administration was established on 22 December 2001. On 19 June 2002, the final day of an Emergency Loya Jirga, President Hamid Karzai was indirectly elected as Head of State of Afghanistan’s Transitional
Authority. This officially signalled a new era of politics in Afghanistan and the commencement of the reconstruction of its civil society. With the fall of the Taliban and the relocation of the Rabbani government from Faizabad in Badakhshan to Kabul in November 2001, there has been a dramatic improvement in civil liberties for all Afghans, with the residents of major centres, particularly Kabul, immediately enjoying greater freedom in the expression of traditional cultural practices. Music programs once again fill the airwaves of Radio Afghanistan, theatre productions are staged and cinemas have re-opened. Sport tournaments have been conducted nationwide and public music and dances were performed during *nowruz* celebrations in 2002 (see Daniszewski and Gettleman 2002; Gardish 2002; King 2001), events that had been previously banned by the Taliban militia.

Nevertheless, the performance of non-religious aesthetic practices remains a contentious issue in this early period of Afghanistan’s nascent democracy. Tensions as to what is and is not appropriate Islamic behaviour have again become evident with the bans in August 2002 of ‘indecently attired’ female vocalists and the prohibition of Indian films that depict women dancing. It seems that the issue of contention underpinning this censorship relates to notions of appropriate clothing and conduct for women in a conservative Islamic society. Only nine months after the Taliban were deposed, Radio-Television Afghanistan, backed by the Supreme Court of Afghanistan’s Transitional Authority, found it necessary to impose similar, albeit less severe, prohibitions on the broadcasting of aesthetic practices which were deemed to be offensive to “religious and traditional values” (Salahuddin 2002). The free expression of cultural performances thus remains contingent upon prevailing political and religious ideologies.

**Future Projections**

Undoubtedly, it is too early to predict how this new democratic period in Afghanistan will unfold. Indeed, in mid-2002, outside of Kabul, very little has changed. Virtually autonomous fiefdoms under the control of former *mujahideen* and military commanders, most of whom are only nominally supportive of the Karzai regime, have once again re-emerged. Many of these regional and local rulers continue to impose strict Islamic codes of conduct in the territories under their control. Nevertheless, these are early days. What remains clear is that until Afghanistan has consolidated its process of civil society construction with an emphasis on transforming the ‘culture of the
Kalashnikov’ into a democratic society in which the general population is disarmed, the infrastructure dramatically improved, landmines cleared, and the basic needs of food, security, housing, and health are met, it is unlikely that the safeguarding of cultural heritage will be a high priority for either the government or the populace. Certainly, as has become evident through the historical review presented in this thesis, rapid modernisation has always been met with resistance from conservative elements of Afghan society.

In the face of existential hardship and an uncertain future – civil war, drought, famine, natural disasters, unemployment, isolation from the global community, and so on – sport and aesthetic performances in particular, functioned in Badakhshan not only as powerful expressions of local culture but also as sources of empowerment, relief and fun. Moreover, given the factionalised nature of Afghanistan, non-religious practices may represent a positive means of nation-building by strengthening community relationships across sectarian, social and political divisions and rebuilding confidence in what constitutes Afghan cultural identity.

The destruction of the Buddha statues by the Taliban is a tragic and tangible manifestation of the impact of ultra-extremist Islam upon Afghanistan’s cultural heritage (Manhart 2001; UNESCO 2001). I have argued, however, that it is important to recognise that a culture’s heritage not only depends on the endurance of such tangible or material objects, but also on the continuation of ‘living’ cultural practices. In fact, as was demonstrated in this thesis, intangible aesthetic practices such as the performances of ghazals or improvised solo dances have paradoxically proved to be much more resilient than the tangible Buddha statues. The nature of embodiment implies that aesthetic practices will endure, at the very least in the hearts of the Afghan people.
Appendix 1: Glossary of Foreign and Uncommon English Terms as well as Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aga Khan</td>
<td>آغا خان</td>
<td>Spiritual leader of the Seveneer Shiite Ismailis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahl-e Hadith</td>
<td>اهل الحديث</td>
<td>Literally ‘The people of the Hadith’, an “offshoot of the Indian subcontinent reformist movement founded by Shah Waliullah in the 18th century” (Roy 1995:81). A religious school that advocates a return to the Quran and Sunna, refuses to acknowledge the four legal schools of Sunni Islam and strongly condemns Sufism and Shiism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ailaq</td>
<td>عيلاق</td>
<td>A temporary camp on a high mountain pasture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alaqadar</td>
<td>علاقه دار</td>
<td>A government-appointed administrator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alaqadari</td>
<td>علاقه داري</td>
<td>Smallest administrative division, a subdistrict of a province.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amir</td>
<td>أمير</td>
<td>Literally, ‘military commander’, the title of the Afghan rulers from 1826 to 1926.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Word</td>
<td>Arabic Word</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amir al-Momineen</td>
<td>أمير المؤمنين</td>
<td>Arabic, literally ‘Commander of the Faithful’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amr bil marof wa nai an munkir</td>
<td>أمر بالمعروف و نهى عن المنكر</td>
<td>Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amu Darya</td>
<td>آمودریا</td>
<td>Northern Afghanistan’s main river. In Badakhshan, the Amu Darya creates a natural border with Tajikistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aniconism</td>
<td>انيكونزم</td>
<td>The use of symbols that are not shaped into an image of human form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aqsaqal</td>
<td>آقسفال</td>
<td>Turkic, literally a ‘white-beard’ (Dari, rish safid), a village elder. Usually elected by the local community (village, valley) and approved by the ruler.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arbab</td>
<td>ارابب</td>
<td>A mayor/leader/elder/chief of a village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argu</td>
<td>آرغو</td>
<td>Larger settlement in western Badakhshan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>armonia</td>
<td>آمونیا</td>
<td>A harmonium, a free-reed aerophone with a bellows-operated keyboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashura</td>
<td>عاشورا</td>
<td>The tenth day of the lunar month of Moharram and a day of voluntary fast. For the Shiites, this day commemorates the martyrdom of Hussain at Karbala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atan</td>
<td>اتن</td>
<td>A traditional Pushtun group dance, accompanied by the atan tune.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atan-e meli</td>
<td>اتن ملی</td>
<td>Afghanistan’s national dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atin Jelaw</td>
<td>آین جلول</td>
<td>Village in western Badakhshan with an important and still operative caravanserai along the ancient trade route Wakhan-Baharak-Faizabad-Keshem-Taloqan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avesta</td>
<td>اوسنا</td>
<td>The ancient Persian language spoken by the Zoroasterians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awqaf</td>
<td>اوقاف</td>
<td>Religious endowments. Plural of waqf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>azan</td>
<td>آذان</td>
<td>The Muslim call to prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bache</strong></td>
<td>Boy, son, a boy who impersonates female dancers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bache baz</strong></td>
<td>A lover of boys, pederast.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bache bazi</strong></td>
<td>Child play, the performance of a dancing boy, pederasty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Badakhshan</strong></td>
<td>Afghanistan's most north-eastern province.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bagh</strong></td>
<td>Garden, orchard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bagh-e ban</strong></td>
<td>A gardener.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baharak</strong></td>
<td>Largest settlement in the central basin of Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bait</strong></td>
<td>A poetic line or verse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>baradar</strong></td>
<td>Persian, denoting brother (singular), but also has a religious meaning referring to a Muslim.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>barakat</strong></td>
<td>A blessing. A quality possessed especially by holy men in Islam but extends also to places and objects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>baya</strong></td>
<td>An oath of allegiance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bazi</strong></td>
<td>Persian, denoting play, but also refers to game and dance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bazigar</strong></td>
<td>Persian, denoting a dancing boy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bazi kardan</strong></td>
<td>Persian, to play.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BBC</strong></td>
<td>British Broadcasting Cooperation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>bulbul</strong></td>
<td>A nightingale.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>barga</strong></td>
<td>A head-to-toe covering made mostly of nylon. At the level of the eyes, a small net is inserted so as to allow for some orientation whilst walking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>buzkashi</strong></td>
<td>Persian, literally 'goat-snatching', a term for the northern Afghan equestrian tournament.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>caliph</strong></td>
<td>Arabic, literally 'deputy of God', a head or ruler of the Muslim community, who as the successor of Mohammad, guided the Muslim community in civil and religious affairs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>caravanserai</strong></td>
<td>لارواشراي</td>
<td>Large rest house for traders and travellers who were travelling along Badakhshan’s ancient trade routes, the Silk Road.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>chadri</strong></td>
<td>جادری</td>
<td>Persian, a woman’s veil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>chahar bait</strong></td>
<td>خهاربایت</td>
<td>A quatrain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>chahar shambe awal-e sal</strong></td>
<td>خهارنیمه اول سال</td>
<td>The first Wednesday in the Persian New Year (approximately 21 March).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>chaikhana</strong></td>
<td>جابینکانه</td>
<td>A local teahouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>chaman</strong></td>
<td>جمین</td>
<td>Persian, literally a meadow, but in an Afghan context denotes a garden or lawn with flowers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>chapan</strong></td>
<td>جپین</td>
<td>A coat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>chapandaz</strong></td>
<td>رپین آراز</td>
<td>A <em>buzkashi</em> rider or <em>buzkashi</em> champion. Plural <em>chapandazan</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>charkhak</strong></td>
<td>چرهک</td>
<td>A local fair with amusement activities such as ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>charkh-e falak</strong></td>
<td>چره فلک</td>
<td>Ferris wheels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chung</strong></td>
<td>چینغ</td>
<td>People of Moghol ethnicity, presumed to be descendents of Ghengis Khan and living in isolated villages in Badakhshan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIA</strong></td>
<td>The United States’ Central Intelligence Agency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CNN</strong></td>
<td>Cable News Network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>daf</strong></td>
<td>دهف</td>
<td>The Arabic noun for a tambourine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dai</strong></td>
<td>دای</td>
<td>Literally, ‘summoner’, a term for a missionary in various Muslim groups. The term was especially used among the Ismailis before and during the Fatimid period as well as in the Alamut period of Ismaili history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dambura</strong></td>
<td>دمپوره</td>
<td>An Arabic term for a long-necked, plucked two-stringed lute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>darya</strong></td>
<td>دریا</td>
<td>A Persian noun for sea and river.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dastar khwan</strong></td>
<td>دستارخوان</td>
<td>The Dari word for a long dining cloth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dawa</td>
<td>دعوت</td>
<td>An Arabic term, literally meaning ‘summons’ or invitation to Islam. In the context of the Ismailis, this term refers to the hierarchy of the Ismaili religious organisation in the pre-Fatimid, Fatimid and Alamut periods of Ismaili history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dervish</td>
<td>دوشي</td>
<td>A Persian word for a follower of a Sufi order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dewana</td>
<td>دیوانه</td>
<td>A Sufi or dervish who may be seen to be mad, crazy, insane, and/or frenzied with love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhikr</td>
<td>ذکر</td>
<td>Arabic, a Sufi term for repetition of certain words or phrases in praise of God. Also spelled zikr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>din</td>
<td>دین</td>
<td>Religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diwan</td>
<td>دیوان</td>
<td>Persian, a collection of poems, usually by one author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dohaini</td>
<td>دوبایی</td>
<td>Persian, a quatrain, two verses or lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dohol</td>
<td>دهل</td>
<td>A double-headed barrel-shaped frame drum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doira</td>
<td>دایره</td>
<td>Persian, a type of tambourine. Also called daf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dovazdah Imami Shiite</td>
<td>شیعه دوازده امامی</td>
<td>Twelver Shiite Muslims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRA</td>
<td>دموکراتیک جمهوری افغانستان</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dutar</td>
<td>دوتار</td>
<td>A two-stringed plucked lute, especially common in north-western Afghanistan and the trans-Oxus region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ebriq</td>
<td>ابریق</td>
<td>A clay ewer, pitcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emic/etic</td>
<td></td>
<td>These distinctions were coined by the American linguist Kenneth Pike. ‘Emic’ denotes a native’s point of view whereas a researcher’s ‘etic’ approach is analytical and may utilise general classifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emirate</td>
<td>امیرت</td>
<td>Arabic, an empire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esal</td>
<td>عسل</td>
<td>Honey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eshaq</td>
<td>عشق</td>
<td>Love, passion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faizabad</td>
<td>فایزباد</td>
<td>The provincial capital of Badakhshan, located in the Kokcha river valley.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>falak</strong></td>
<td>فلک</td>
<td>Literally 'sky' and metaphorically translates as 'fortune' or 'destiny'. In Badakhshan, this term is also used in a general sense to refer to a 'verse'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fard</strong></td>
<td>فرد</td>
<td>A separate couplet from another poem and unrelated to the main poem that follows. It is often a couplet from a famous ghazal or rubai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>farhang</strong></td>
<td>فرهنگ</td>
<td>Persian, denotes both culture and civilisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>farhang-e jang</strong></td>
<td>فرهنگ جنگ</td>
<td>Persian, 'Culture of War'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farhang-e Khalq</td>
<td>فرهنگ خلق</td>
<td>Persian, name of an Afghan cultural journal “Culture of the Masses”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farhang-e Mardom</td>
<td>فرهنگ مردم</td>
<td>Persian, name of an Afghan cultural journal “People's Culture”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>farsiwan</strong></td>
<td>فارسی‌ون</td>
<td>Persian-speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fatimids</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>A major Muslim dynasty of Ismaili caliphs in North Africa (from 909) and later in Egypt (973-1171), who claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammad through Ali and derived their name from the Prophet's daughter, Fatima.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fatwa</strong></td>
<td>فتاوا</td>
<td>Pronouncements, injunctions, and the rulings of the scholars of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fiqh</strong></td>
<td>فقه</td>
<td>Jurisprudence. The discipline of elucidating Sharia law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>futa</strong></td>
<td>فوطة</td>
<td>A five metre long belt that is tied around a Badakhshi wrestler's waist and holds his shirt together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GBAO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gorno-Badakhshanskaia Avtonomnai Oblast (Autonomous Region of Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghalcha</td>
<td>A construct that was applied by Western colonial writers to the Ismailis of the Pamir region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghamza</td>
<td>A Persianised Arabic word denoting a flirtatious gaze.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghazal</td>
<td>An Arabic noun for a short poem, which has been influenced by Sufism and often contains a theme of love. The ghazal “consists of an indeterminate number of couplets...which are thematically independent and united only by the metre and rhyme-scheme...Both couplets of the first lines rhyme; in the succeeding couplets the original rhyme scheme is maintained in the second line. The rhyme scheme is thus <em>aa, ba, ca etc.</em>” (Powers 2001a). As a musical form, this poetic style was possibly created in the Subcontinent, if not in Afghanistan by the thirteenth century Hazara poet Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) from Balkh (see Baily 1988:111).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghichak</td>
<td>A northern Afghan spiked fiddle.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghina</td>
<td>Arabic, refers to singing and song.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gholam bachagan</td>
<td>Page boys, slave boys.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ginan</td>
<td>An artistic genre (songs) which integrates poetry and music in the local vernaculars, especially among South Asian Ismailis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gudi paran jangi</td>
<td>Kite-flying.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gul</td>
<td>Persian, flower.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guldashte</td>
<td>Persian, bunch of flowers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gulshan</td>
<td>Persian, literally a place of flowers, but metaphorically also refers to the expression of love and the maintenance of friendships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gulzar</td>
<td>A flower bed, a flower garden.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hadith</em></td>
<td>حديث</td>
<td>Literally ‘report’ or ‘narrative’, used for the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. In Shiite Islam, the <em>hadith</em> also includes the traditions of the Imams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hagh parast</em></td>
<td>حق پرست</td>
<td>Arabic, followers of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hajji</em></td>
<td>حاجي</td>
<td>Honorary title bestowed to those who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hakim</em></td>
<td>طيلم</td>
<td>Governor, district officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>halal</em></td>
<td>حلال</td>
<td>A permissible action according to Sharia law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>halwa sabodi</em></td>
<td>حلوا صبدي</td>
<td>A dessert made with milk and pistachios.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hamraz</em></td>
<td>همراه</td>
<td>Confidant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hanafi</em></td>
<td>حنفي</td>
<td>One of the main Sunni schools of jurisprudence recognising four sources of law: Quran, the <em>sunna</em>, the <em>giyas</em> and the <em>ijma</em>. The major form of Islamic law in Afghanistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hanbali</em></td>
<td>حنابل</td>
<td>One of the most conservative schools of Islamic jurisprudence and which is practised in Saudi Arabia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>handasah al sawt</em></td>
<td>هندرسا الصرت</td>
<td>Arabic, literally the ‘artistic engineering of sound’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami</em></td>
<td>حركت انقلاب اسلامي</td>
<td>Islamic Revolutionary Movement led by Mawlawi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>haram</em></td>
<td>حرام</td>
<td>Arabic, in a legal sense this term denotes actions forbidden according to Sharia law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hasan</em></td>
<td>حسن</td>
<td>Arabic, denoting good, but not fully reliable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hazaragi</em></td>
<td>هزاراچی</td>
<td>The language spoken by the mostly Twelver Shiite Hazaras who mostly inhabit central Afghanistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hezb</em></td>
<td>حزب</td>
<td>Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq-e Afghanistan</em></td>
<td>حزب دموکراتیک لق افغانستان</td>
<td>People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezb-e Islami</td>
<td>حزب اسلامي</td>
<td>Party of Islam, an extremist-radical Islamist party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezb-e Islami (Khalis)</td>
<td>حزب اسلامي (خالesi)</td>
<td>A breakaway faction of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami under the leadership of Mawlawi Mohammad Younus Khalis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezb-e Wahdat</td>
<td>حزب وحدت</td>
<td>Party of Unity, Shiite party of ethnic Hazaras, led by Abdul Karim Khalili.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezb-e Watan</td>
<td>حزب وطن</td>
<td>Fatherland Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honar</td>
<td>هنر</td>
<td>A Persian noun denoting art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honarmand</td>
<td>هنرمند</td>
<td>Artist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honarmandana</td>
<td>هنرمنداننا</td>
<td>Artistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hujja</td>
<td>هجیه</td>
<td>A term from the Quran that means both 'proof' and 'presentation of proof'. In Shiism, Prophets and Imams are designated as ‘proofs’ of God’s presence on earth. In the Ismaili dawa of the pre-Fatimid and Fatimid periods, it was also applied to senior dais and in the Alamut period of Ismaili history it came to be applied to those representing the Imam” (IIS 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>id</td>
<td>عید</td>
<td>An Arabic noun denoting festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>id-e qurban</td>
<td>عید قربان</td>
<td>The ‘Feast of Sacrifice’, commemorates Abraham’s offer, upon the command of Allah, to sacrifice his son Isaac.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>id-e ramazan</td>
<td>عید رمضان</td>
<td>Arabic, also known as Id-e Ramadan, the ‘Feast of the End of Ramadan’. A three-day celebration marking the end of the fasting month which occurs during the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Id fitr and id-e kalan are other terms that are used to denote this feast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ijma</em></td>
<td>اجماع</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus, a means of interpreting the law in those instances not dealt with by revelation or the <em>sunna</em> through the consensus of the <em>ulema.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ijtihad</em></td>
<td>اعتهاد</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literally ‘exertion’. Individual inquiry to establish the ruling of Islamic law in questions not expressly provided for in the <em>Quran</em> and the Traditions (<em>sunna</em>).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imam</td>
<td>امام</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general usage, a leader of prayers or religious leader. In Shiism, the term refers to their spiritual leaders who descended from Ali and the Prophet’s daughter Fatima.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imamate</td>
<td>اهمت</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The institution of hereditary spiritual leadership in Shiism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishkashimi</td>
<td>اشکشمی</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language still spoken by some people who live in the Ishkashim region in the Pamir region.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI</td>
<td>Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, Pakistan’s intelligence organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismaili</td>
<td>اسماعیلی</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevenener Shiite Muslim sectarian group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithna Ashariyya</td>
<td>اثنی عشیری</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literally ‘Twelvers’, the majority branch of the Shiites who acknowledge twelve Imams in lineal succession from Ali after the Prophet Mohammad.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ittehad-e Islami</td>
<td>اتحاد اسلامی</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Alliance, led by Abdul-Rab al-Rasul Sayyaf.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ittehad-e Islami Mujahideen-e Afghanistan</td>
<td>اتحاد اسلامی مjahideen افغانستان</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Mujahideen Alliance of Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jabha</td>
<td>جبهه</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military structure created by commanders; organisation of local members of community into military units.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabha-e Muttahid-e Islami-e Melli baraye Nijat-e Afghanistan</td>
<td>جبهه متحد اسلامی ملی برای نجات افغانستان</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabha-e Nejat-e Melli</td>
<td>National Front Liberation, led by Sebghatullah Mojadiddi.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jafa</td>
<td>Unkindness, sternness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamaat khana</td>
<td>Assembly or religious congregation; also a term used by the Nizari Ismailis of Badakhshan, Gorno-Badakhshan and northern Pakistan for their individual communities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamiat</td>
<td>Society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamiat-e Islami</td>
<td>Islamic Society, an Islamist party in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamiat-e Demokratiki-ye Navin-e Afghanistan</td>
<td>Persian, literally the 'Neo-Democratic Party of Afghanistan'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>janda</td>
<td>A standard, that is, pieces of textiles which are raised on a pole.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jang</td>
<td>Persian, war.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jauz</td>
<td>Persian, nut.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeshen</td>
<td>Literally means festival or celebration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jihad</td>
<td>Arabic, a religious struggle, Islamic resistance, an Islamic war for the cause of Islam.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jihadi</td>
<td>Pertaining to the <em>jihad</em>, that is related to the resistance against the Soviet-backed government (1978-1992).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joma (also juma)</td>
<td>The Arabic word for Friday during which the obligatory midday prayer is performed at a congregational mosque.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>junbesh</td>
<td>A movement or party. Commonly pronounced <em>jumbesh</em> in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junbesh-e Melli-ye Islami</td>
<td>National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, an Afghan political party led by the Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurm</td>
<td>Settlement in the central basin of Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabah</td>
<td>Arabic, the sacred enclosure at Mecca.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kafir</td>
<td>An unbeliever.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamaz</td>
<td>A brand-name for a four-wheel powered industrial/military truck which was manufactured in the former Soviet Union.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kataghan</td>
<td>The former name for the province in northern Afghanistan that included Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar. Also known under the spelling of Qataghan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kataghani</td>
<td>Pertaining to the region of Kataghan. This term also refers to a genre of entertainment music that would often include dancing, especially improvised solo dances, and which was common in the former Province of Kataghan and Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kesbi</td>
<td>An Arabic noun for a professional performer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keshem</td>
<td>Urban settlement in Badakhshan’s western regions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KhAD</td>
<td>Khadamat-e Atalaat-e Dawlati (State Information Service), Afghanistan’s Intelligence Organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khahr</td>
<td>Thorn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khahr khas</td>
<td>Literally, thorn and straw.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khalifa</td>
<td>A village representative appointed by an Ismaili shah or pir. May also denote a secular and/or religious head of state after Prophet Mohammad. In the context of Ismailism, however, khalifa refers to a religious leader and teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalq</td>
<td>Persian, literally ‘Masses’, one of the Communist parties that emerged in Afghanistan in the 1960s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>khan</td>
<td>A leader of a group who was originally of Mongol or Turkic origin. Often refers to a wealthy, influential landowner. In Afghanistan, this term is used as a title of respect, especially when addressing an influential person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khanaga</td>
<td>A Sufi brotherhood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khanate</td>
<td>An English construct denoting the state or district ruled by a khan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khanawada</td>
<td>Persian, denoting extended family formations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khane</td>
<td>Persian, a household or house. Commonly pronounced <code>khana</code> in Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khar</td>
<td>Donkey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kharabat</td>
<td>The section of Kabul’s Shahr-e Kohne where professional musicians and dancers used to live. In poetry, this term refers to a tavern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khel</td>
<td>The patrilineal group of relatives in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kheysh</td>
<td>A relative, kin.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kheysh wa qawn</td>
<td>Kinship, a network of relations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khiaban</td>
<td>Persian, a main street.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khirqa</td>
<td>An Arabic term for a cloak or robe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khurasan</td>
<td>This historical region today spans the territories of Afghanistan, eastern Iran and neighbouring Central Asian regions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khushkhana</td>
<td>A Dari word denoting a guesthouse or guestroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khusraw</td>
<td>Persian, a royal person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khwaja</td>
<td>A descendent of one of the first caliphs. Also an honorary title assumed by members of Central Asian religious orders.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirghizi</td>
<td>The Turkic language spoken by the Kirghiz people in the Wakhan Corridor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kofta</td>
<td>A ground meat dish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokcha River</td>
<td>Badakhshan’s main river, which drains into the Amu Darya in Takhar province.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koran-e Munjan</td>
<td>Settlement in southern Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuchi</td>
<td>A pastoral nomad.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kulcha</td>
<td>A hard, round cookie which is prepared by women two to three days before the id celebration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kushti giri</td>
<td>A common Persian noun for wrestling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladhhdhat, also lazzat</td>
<td>Arabic, denoting enjoyment, delight.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lahw</td>
<td>This Arabic term was used in early Islamic texts to describe performances that included a range of entertainment and amusement activities such as dance, music, play, gambling, sports.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laib</td>
<td>Arabic, referring to sport activities and play.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lajward</td>
<td>Lapis lazuli, a blue-coloured semi-precious stone found predominantly in Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lal</td>
<td>The precious stone ruby.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lala</td>
<td>Persian noun for the tulip.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamar</td>
<td>Name of a cultural journal in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMA</td>
<td>Laban Movement Analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loya jirga</td>
<td>A Pushto expression for a Grand National Assembly/Council of Elders in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ludic</td>
<td>An adjective denoting undirected and spontaneously playful behaviour. This term was widely used by Victor Turner (1974; 1982), especially with respect to liminal engagements, such as rituals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madah</td>
<td>Arabic, a panegry that is usually performed at religious occasions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madrassa</td>
<td>A higher religious school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>mahali</td>
<td>محلی</td>
<td>This Arabic word refers to locality. In the context of Badakhshan, this term implies a local genre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahaz-e Melli Islami</td>
<td>محاذي ملی اسلامی</td>
<td>Islamic National Front, a mujahideen party that was led by Sayyid Ahmad Gailani.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mai</td>
<td>می</td>
<td>Islamic mujahideen party that was led by Sayyid Ahmad Gailani.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maidan</td>
<td>میدان</td>
<td>A ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maidan-e askari</td>
<td>میدان عسكری</td>
<td>A military ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maidan-e id</td>
<td>میدان غنی</td>
<td>The grounds of the id celebration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maidan-e sang-e mahr</td>
<td>میدان سنف سمر</td>
<td>The local term for Faizabad's historical space in which the nowruz festivities take place annually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mai khana</td>
<td>می خانه</td>
<td>Tavern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makhruh</td>
<td>منروح</td>
<td>An action that according to Sharia law is regarded as reprehensible or unfavourable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maktab</td>
<td>مكتب</td>
<td>Arabic, a primary religious school, usually in a village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maldar</td>
<td>مالدار</td>
<td>Pastoral nomads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malik</td>
<td>مالک</td>
<td>A village leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maqam</td>
<td>مقام</td>
<td>Arabic, denoting a musical mode, scale or melody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maqbul</td>
<td>مقبول</td>
<td>Arabic, denoting acceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marg</td>
<td>مریز</td>
<td>Persian, death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marghad</td>
<td>مرقد</td>
<td>Arabic, tomb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maslaki</td>
<td>مسلکی</td>
<td>An Arabic noun for professional or vocational, often denoting hereditary performers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mastawo</td>
<td>ماستاوه</td>
<td>A Badakhshian term denoting a lentil stew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matla</td>
<td>مطلع</td>
<td>An Arabic term for the opening distich of a poem, such as a ghazal or a qasida.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mawlawi</td>
<td>مولوی</td>
<td>A mullah, religious cleric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mazhab</td>
<td>مذهب</td>
<td>Religion. An Arabic noun for a denomination, sect or religious creed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mehmani</td>
<td>مهمنان</td>
<td>A Persian noun for a joyful gathering, a party by invitation that often includes a banquet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>mela</td>
<td>This Dari word can be understood as a picnic, an outing in the countryside, but also a fair, fete or folk festival.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melismatic</td>
<td>An adjective that means ornate or florid in melody.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mihan</td>
<td>Persian, homeland.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milla</td>
<td>Persian, nation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mir</td>
<td>A Tajik word, literally meaning 'local chief', a leader of local dynasty. A shorter version of Amir.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mir-e shah</td>
<td>A local aristocratic ruler of Badakhshan, at times also called Amir or Mir.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moharram</td>
<td>The first month of the Islamic calendar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mubah</td>
<td>An action that is permitted according to Sharia law.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muhajerin</td>
<td>Someone who migrates because of Islam, a refugee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mujahideen</td>
<td>Islamic resistance fighters. Plural of mujahid.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-mukhannathun</td>
<td>Arabic, performers who use effeminate movements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mullah</td>
<td>The title for a local religious leader.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murid</td>
<td>A disciple of a Sufi order.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mursal</td>
<td>Arabic, denoting the lack of connected chains with respect to the reliability of a hadith.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musahiban</td>
<td>Musahiban is a lineage name in Afghanistan whose members were the descendants of Sultan Mohammad Khan, a brother of Dost Mohammad (1819-1839).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musiqi</td>
<td>Arabic/Persian, denoting secular music, professional or art music.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustalis</td>
<td>Adherents of a branch of the Ismailis who supported al-Mustali, the younger son of the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustansir (died 1094) as his successor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutawatir</td>
<td>ventus</td>
<td>An Arabic term meaning confirmed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>muza</td>
<td>موزه</td>
<td>Long boots worn in Badakhshan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>نورواي نرويان</td>
<td>Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, an NGO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nakhud</td>
<td>نخود</td>
<td>This Persian word translates as roasted chick peas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaz</td>
<td>نماز</td>
<td>A Persian noun for the obligatory Islamic prayer, one of the five pillars in Islam. A religious bodily and sonic practice which is conducted five times a day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaz-e id</td>
<td>نمازعيد</td>
<td>Arabic, the public prayer during the id celebration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nan</td>
<td>نان</td>
<td>A common type of leavened bread in South and Central Asia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nat</td>
<td>نات</td>
<td>Arabic, a religious or mystical ghazal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nawaz</td>
<td>نواز</td>
<td>This term refers to someone who performs, and often adjoins an instrument's name to indicate a performer's accomplishment and skill on that instrument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nawhe</td>
<td>نهجه</td>
<td>Mourning chant, a type of Shiite religious song.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nay</td>
<td>فنی</td>
<td>Persian, a type of flute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nazanin</td>
<td>نازین</td>
<td>Beloved, especially in a Sufi context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nazar</td>
<td>نظر</td>
<td>An Arabic term, meaning gazing, especially in a Sufi context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nazar ila l-murd</td>
<td>نظریة المروء</td>
<td>Arabic, literally 'the contemplation at youth'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>نورواي نرويان</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noql</td>
<td>نقل</td>
<td>A sugar-coated nut (almond, chick pea, apricot kernel) - a popular Afghan sweet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nowruz</td>
<td>نوروز</td>
<td>A Persian term for the Persian New Year, celebrated annually around 21 March. Literally translates as 'new day' and refers to the New Year of many Persian-speaking communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
<td>نورواي نرويان</td>
<td>North West Frontier Province in northern Pakistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>oblast</strong></td>
<td>Russian, an administrative region or territory.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OED</strong></td>
<td>Oxford English Dictionary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ostinato</strong></td>
<td>A musicological term, indicating a recurring or frequently repeated musical structure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pahlawan</strong></td>
<td>A Persian word for a champion wrestler, rider or hero.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pakol</strong></td>
<td>A flat topped woollen cap with a folded/rolled lower end. The cap was possibly introduced to the North West Frontier Province and the Northern Areas region of Pakistan during the British colonial period.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pakaftan</strong></td>
<td>Persian, dancing. Literally means 'tap dancing'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pamiri</strong></td>
<td>Persian, dancing. Literally means 'tap dancing'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pamiri rubab</strong></td>
<td>A six-stringed unfretted plucked lute played in the Pamir regions of Badakhshan and Gorno-Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Panj-e Darya</strong></td>
<td>The upper part of the Amu Darya in north-eastern Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parcham</strong></td>
<td>Persian, literally 'Banner', one of the Communist parties that emerged in Afghanistan in the late 1960s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>parlando</strong></td>
<td>The direction that a musical passage is to be played or sung.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>parwana</strong></td>
<td>Persian, butterfly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDPA</td>
<td>Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq-e Afghanistan ('People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan'), the Communist Party of Afghanistan that was founded in the mid-1960s.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyrgian scale</td>
<td>This type of scale “is frequently used with...diatonic non-Western melodies whose final or apparent tonic is related to the scale type...The most characteristic feature of such melodies is the presence of a scale degree a semitone above the final or apparent tonic” (Powers 2001b).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pilaw</td>
<td>A steamed rice dish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pir</td>
<td>Persian, a religious dignitary of a Sufi sect. The Arabic equivalent is shaikh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushhto</td>
<td>The language spoken by the Pushhtuns in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pushtunwali</td>
<td>A code of conduct that incorporates the totality of social norms and values of the Pushhtuns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC</td>
<td>Polyvinyl Chloride.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al Qaeda</td>
<td>Arabic, literally meaning ‘Military Base’, the terrorist organisation of Osama bin Laden.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qala</td>
<td>A walled, enclosed settlement in Badakhshan, which protects a community or family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qamandan</td>
<td>A field commander, especially during the mujahideen period in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qanun-e jang</td>
<td>Persian, literally the ‘Rule of War’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic Term</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>qasida</td>
<td>An Arabic noun for the lyrical 'ode' that is commonly used in verse form in classical Arab and Persian music. A <em>qasida</em> may be used, for example, as a praise song (for a king), to promote virtue, or in a purely religious sense such as with Nasir Khusraw, but also in the context of mourning. According to Amnon Shiloah (2001), a <em>qasida</em> consists of &quot;many lines, sometimes over 100. Each line is divided into two equal parts and subdivided into feet. Each <em>qasida</em> has a single rhyme and uniform metre...The basic compositional concept is that each line should be independent and contain a complete, self-sufficient idea&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qawm</td>
<td>Arabic and Persian, a common term for kinship affiliations in Afghanistan with many meanings (group clan/tribe/community).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qazi</td>
<td>A Sharia-applying judge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qibla</td>
<td>An Arabic noun, denoting the direction toward which Muslims turn in praying.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qiraah</td>
<td>Quranic chant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qishlaq</td>
<td>The living arrangement of a <em>khel</em> (village, settlement).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qismat</td>
<td>Arabic, a common term in Afghanistan to denote fate or luck.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qiyyam</td>
<td>An Arabic noun denoting standing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qiyas</td>
<td>The method of reasoning in Islam by analogy with a known example.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qowud</td>
<td>A Persian noun denoting sitting.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quran</td>
<td>The unquestioned sacred text of Muslims.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>qurbani</td>
<td>The meat of the animal that has been sacrificed for the <em>id-e qurban</em> ritual.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qustin</td>
<td>A Persian noun for a wrestling style used particularly in Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rakat</td>
<td>The plural of the Arabic noun of bowing in Islamic prayer (singular, <em>raka</em>).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raqs</td>
<td>Arabic, a common term for dance in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raqs al-sharqi</td>
<td>An Arabic term denoting belly dancing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rasgueado</td>
<td>A strumming technique that is commonly used in Flamenco guitar playing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rawan</td>
<td>As a noun, this term may refer to a soul or spirit; as an adjective it may mean 'flowing'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rish safid</td>
<td>A Persian noun for village elder, literally a ‘white-beard’, an elder who is respected in the community for his knowledge and experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubab</td>
<td>A Persianised term for the Arabic lute.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubai</td>
<td>An Arabic word for the Persian poetic style of a quatrain, consisting of four hemistichs or half lines. In Afghanistan, the quatrain is also commonly known as <em>chahar bait</em> and deals often with the theme of love.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubato</td>
<td>A musicological term denoting the expressive alteration of rhythm or tempo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruz-e id</td>
<td>The first day of <em>id</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sabzi</td>
<td>A spinach and yoghurt dish in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahik</td>
<td>An Arabic term meaning 'correct'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahw</td>
<td>Arabic, meaning 'sober'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sajda (also known as sujud)</strong></td>
<td>سجدة</td>
<td>An Arabic noun for the action of a Muslim touching the ground with his forehead during ritual prostration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salafi</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>A mid-nineteenth century Sunni Muslim reformist movement which has been inspired by early Muslims and advocates a return to the basics of Islam on the basis of the Quran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saljuqs</strong></td>
<td>سلجوقیه</td>
<td>A major Muslim dynasty of Turkic origin that ruled vast regions such as Persia, Iraq, Syria and Palestine from approximately 1038 to 1194.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>salmani</strong></td>
<td>سلمانی</td>
<td>A barber who also engages in artistic employment as well as blood-letting and circumcisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sama</strong></td>
<td>سماء</td>
<td>This term refers to the listening of music by Sufis but also includes the performance of bodily movements such as dancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>samovar</strong></td>
<td>سماور</td>
<td>Russian, used as a local term in northern Afghanistan for a temporary teahouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sang</strong></td>
<td>سنبل</td>
<td>Persian, stone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sardar</strong></td>
<td>سردار</td>
<td>A male member of one of the ruling Afghan clans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sarghin</strong></td>
<td>سرغین</td>
<td>A reed instrument, similar to a surnai (see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>saur</strong></td>
<td>تور</td>
<td>The second month of the Afghan calendar saur corresponding with the Gregorian month of April.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sayyid (also Sayed)</strong></td>
<td>سبیل</td>
<td>Families that claim descendency from the Prophet Mohammad or his son-in-law Ali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sazman-e jawanan-e Musulman</strong></td>
<td>سازمان جوانان مسلمان</td>
<td>The ‘Organisation of Muslim Youth’ in Afghanistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>serai</strong></td>
<td>سرای</td>
<td>Rest house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setam-e Melli</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘National Suppression Party’, led by Tahir Badakhshi from Badakhshan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shah</td>
<td>A religious dignitary of the Ismaili sect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shahid</td>
<td>Arabic/Persian, meaning ‘witness’. May also refer to ear- or eyewitness, a beautiful woman, a handsome man, beloved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shahid khane</td>
<td>Tavern, but also meeting place for Sufis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahr-e Bozurg</td>
<td>A settlement in Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahr-e-Kohne</td>
<td>Persian, literally ‘Old City’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahr-e-Naw</td>
<td>Persian, literally ‘New City’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shaikh</td>
<td>A religious leader; a leader of a Sufi order.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shalwar qamiz</td>
<td>The most common type of male clothing in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The suit consists of long, loose shirt that reaches to the level of the knee and baggy trousers that are fastened by a piece of string.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sham</td>
<td>Candle.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharia</td>
<td>Literally, ‘the path to be followed’, thereby denoting Muslim law as well as the totality of the Islamic way of life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shauq</td>
<td>Persian, a spectacle.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shauqi</td>
<td>An Arabic derived Dari noun for an amateur performer with an intense passion for his art.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheghni</td>
<td>The language spoken by the people of Sheghman in Badakhshan and across the Amu Darya in Tajikistan’s Gorno-Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sher</td>
<td>Arabic, meaning poetry or verse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shiite</strong></td>
<td>شیعه</td>
<td>The general name for those Muslims who hold to the rights of Ali and his descendants to leadership in the community, whether recognised by the majority or not, or any particular sect holding this position. Shiite as an adjective refers to the doctrinal position; as a noun, to an adherent of Shiism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>shir chai</strong></td>
<td>شیر چای</td>
<td>Black tea which has been boiled in salty milk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>shish kebab</strong></td>
<td>شیش کباب</td>
<td>Literally, ‘fried lung and liver pieces’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shomali</strong></td>
<td>شمالی</td>
<td>North, a plain north of Kabul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shula-ye Jawid</strong></td>
<td>شعله جاوید</td>
<td>Dari, literally ‘Eternal Flame’, a Maoist political party that was founded in the 1960s in Afghanistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>shura</strong></td>
<td>شورا</td>
<td>A meeting, council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>shura-e nazar-e shomali</strong></td>
<td>شورای نظر شمالی</td>
<td>Advisory council of the north, set up by Massoud, and included a military and civil administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sirr</strong></td>
<td>سیر</td>
<td>Arabic, literally mystery, referring to the inner nature of the soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sukhtan</strong></td>
<td>سوختن</td>
<td>Persian, to burn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sunna</strong></td>
<td>سنن</td>
<td>This term includes the practices, customs, deeds, and utterances of the Prophet Mohammad, and conforms to Islam's normative texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunni</strong></td>
<td>سی</td>
<td>Arabic, literally the ‘people of the custom and the community’, referring to the majority of Muslims who accept the authority of the whole first generation of Muslims and the validity of the historical community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sura</strong></td>
<td>سورة</td>
<td>A ‘chapter’ of the Quran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>surnai</strong></td>
<td>سرنای</td>
<td>A double-reed wind instrument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>synecdoche</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>A figure of speech in which a part is named but the whole is understood or the whole is named but a part is understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tajiki</td>
<td>The type of Persian that is spoken in some parts of northern Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talib</td>
<td>A religious student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanbur</td>
<td>Persian, a type of lute.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taqin</td>
<td>An Arabic noun for a skullcap. In Badakhshan, the taqin is usually embroidered and has a curved top and is worn under the turban.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taqqiya</td>
<td>The precautionary dissimulation of one’s religious beliefs, especially in time of persecution or danger. While practised by both Sunnis and Shiites, it has been especially adopted by Shiites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tarana</td>
<td>A song or melody. In Afghanistan, a tarana refers to a nationalistic, patriotic song.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tariqa</td>
<td>Way or path, the path that is usually followed by Sufi orders.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tasnif</td>
<td>A type of epic song about freedom and nation, usually performed with instruments and music.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tawhid</td>
<td>This Islamic notion reflects the unity of God.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taziyeh</td>
<td>A Persian term, marking the martyrdom of Hussein during the tenth day of the lunar month of Moharram.</td>
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<tr>
<td>telpak</td>
<td>A fur-trimmed hat worn by buzkashi riders in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>teriak</td>
<td>Opium.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokhum bazi</td>
<td>A Persian term for a game called ‘knocking eggs’ or literally ‘egg-fighting’. In this game, the two contestants are equipped with an egg each and in order to win, one has to break the other’s egg.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tomban wa pirahan</td>
<td>Trousers and shirt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>tonban</td>
<td>This term, colloquially pronounced tomban, is the name for the baggy trousers worn by all Afghan men.</td>
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<tr>
<td>tula</td>
<td>A Dari term for a flute-like wind instrument.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turki</td>
<td>The language spoken by the Moghols in Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkmeni</td>
<td>The Turkic language spoken by the Turkmen people in north-western Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ulema</td>
<td>Senior religious scholars.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umma</td>
<td>A religious community, often in the sense of the totality of Muslims in the world.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>UN International Children's Emergency Fund</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Front</td>
<td>The ‘United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOCHA</td>
<td>UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UNRCO</td>
<td>UN Regional Coordination Officer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSMA</td>
<td>UN Special Mission to Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbeki</td>
<td>The Turkic language spoken by the Uzbek people in northern Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>vibrato</td>
<td>A musicological term that refers to vibration of a tone.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VIP</td>
<td>Very Important Person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vizier</td>
<td>Minister.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wajd</td>
<td>Arabic, denoting ecstasy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakhi</td>
<td>The language of the people who live in the Wakhan Corridor.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>wali</td>
<td>Arabic, in Afghanistan this term denotes the governor of a province.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waqf (singular), awqaf (plural)</td>
<td>Pious endowment such as land that is given to the Islamic community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watan</td>
<td>An Arabic noun for homeland.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wazir</td>
<td>Minister. Also called vizier.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welayat</td>
<td>Province.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wolesi jirga</td>
<td>The fully elected Lower House of the bicameral Afghan Parliament.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woluswali</td>
<td>A larger administrative area in Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wujud</td>
<td>Arabic, referring to 'being'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yar</td>
<td>A polysemous term that may be used in a lyrical, dramatical or epic sense.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zakat</td>
<td>Alms tax, one of the five pillars of Islam.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zamindar</td>
<td>Landlord.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zamin-e sakari</td>
<td>Land that belongs to the Aga Khan but which is usually administered by Ismaili Shahs in Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zamin-e shahi</td>
<td>Land that belongs to Ismaili Shahs in Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zanaka bazi</td>
<td>The act of engaging in an extramarital affair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zebak</td>
<td>Settlement in eastern Badakhshan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zeraat-e abi</td>
<td>Irrigated cultivation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zeraat-e lalmi</td>
<td>Dry farming, non-irrigated or rain-irrigated farming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ziarat</td>
<td>The tomb of a great Sufi ancestor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zikr</td>
<td>Arabic, the repetition of certain words or phrases in praise of God by Sufis. Also spelled dhikr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zirbaghali</td>
<td>A common percussion instrument with a single membrane in northern Afghanistan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Notes on Transliteration of Persian and Arabic Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic and Persian consonants and vowels whose transliterations have been simplified for this thesis.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The diacritical sign <em>ain</em> as in, for example, Shi‘ite has been omitted. Instead this word is transliterated as Shiite.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The diphthongs “ow” as in ‘how’ and “hay” as in ‘pay’ are mostly transliterated here as <em>aw</em> and <em>ai</em> respectively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arabic symbol <em>hamza</em> as in the word Qur’an, for example, has been omitted and appears as Quran.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These letters (<em>he</em>) are both transliterated as <em>h</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The letter <em>qaf</em> is transliterated as <em>q</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The letters <em>se</em>, <em>sin</em> and <em>sad</em> are transliterated as <em>s</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The letters <em>te</em> and <em>ta</em> are transliterated as <em>t</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The letter <em>waw</em> is mostly transliterated as <em>w</em> or <em>u</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>글자</td>
<td>설명</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÿ</td>
<td>The letter <em>ya</em> is transliterated as <em>y</em> or <em>i</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ض, ز, ذ</td>
<td>The letters <em>zal, ze, zad</em> and <em>za</em> may be transliterated as <em>z</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The three short vowels which are not expressed in writing are transcribed as: <em>a, e, i, u</em> and <em>o</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Glossary of Peircean Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semiosis</td>
<td></td>
<td>A semiotic process that consists of three basic elements: 1. sign 2. object 3. interpretant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign (or</td>
<td></td>
<td>A sign is the medium of communication; it is something that stands for something else to someone in some way. A sign is not a self-evident idea or entity but is the catalyst for an effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representamen)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
<td>The 'something else,' or entity stood for by the sign, be it in an abstract concept or a concrete object. Peirce suggests two types of objects. One is the existential object he called the dynamical object (an actual tree stands for the word tree). The second type is the immediate object, the object as the sign represents it and as contained within the mind. Thus, the general mental concept 'tree' is the immediate object for the word tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretant</td>
<td>The effect created by bringing the sign and object together in the mind of the perceiver. An interpretant may include feeling and sensation, physical reaction, as well as ideas circulated and processed in language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sign-interpretant</td>
<td>A linguistic-based concept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional interpretant</td>
<td>A direct, unreflected-upon feeling caused by a sign (sense, feeling, or sentiment).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>energetic interpretant</td>
<td>A physical reaction caused by a sign, be it the inconspicuous foot tapping to music, an accelerated heart beat from a police siren, or the withdrawal of a finger from a hot stove.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit</td>
<td>A sign is “related to its object only in consequence of a mental association, [which] depends upon habit...habits are general rules to which the organism has become subjected. They are for the most part conventional or arbitrary. They include all general words, the main body of speech, and any mode of conveying a judgement” (Peirce 1931-1958:3.360).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>The actual effect of a sign, that is, the direct feeling, physical reaction or language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>A semiotic mediation may be understood “as any process in which two elements are brought into articulation by means of or through the intervention of some third element that serves as the vehicle or medium of communication” (Parmentier 1994:24).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Glossary of Peircean Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatic maxim</th>
<th>The meaning of signs may be understood to consist of “all of the effects they have on participants: which includes everything from body movements, through feelings and emotions, to cognitive and linguistic understandings and expressions” (Lewis and Dowsey-Magog 1993:208).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trichotomy</td>
<td>Peirce developed three trichotomies of concepts for analyzing different aspects of a sign and proposed distinct types of relationships between the three basic components of semiosis: sign-object-interpretant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichotomy I</td>
<td>Refers to the nature of the sign. Every chain of semiosis begins with a qualisign followed by sinsign and legisign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qualisign</td>
<td>Tone. A pure quality embedded in a sign such as redness, or the quality of a particular musical sound, or of a harmonic or melodic relation. This aspect helps to determine the identity and semiotic potential of the sign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sinsign</td>
<td>Token. The actual specific instance of a sign, for example each individual appearance of the word ‘the’ on this page or the redness of a particular rose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legisign</td>
<td>Type. The sign as a general type, for example, the word ‘the’ apart from any instance of it, or the concept of ‘the colour red’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichotomy II</td>
<td>Peirce’s second trichotomy specifies three ways that the sign and object are related in a perceiver. It involves the relationship of sign to object through icons, indices and symbols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>icon</strong></td>
<td>Refers to a sign that is related to its object through some type of resemblance between them. The degree, basis, and even accuracy of resemblance is not so much at issue as the fact that resemblance calls forth the object when perceiving the sign. Thus, if a literal musical quotation or even the vaguest trace of another piece brings that piece to mind, iconicity is involved. According to Peirce, only an icon “is inherently oriented toward the past” (Parmentier 1987:107).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>index</strong></td>
<td>Refers to a sign, or representation, that is related to its object through co-occurrence in actual experience and not so much through similarity or analogy. Smoke can serve as an index for fire, a TV show’s theme song can come to serve as an index for a program. The power of indices derives from the fact that the sign-object relations are grounded within one’s own life experiences, and thus become intimately bound as experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>symbol</strong></td>
<td>A sign that is related to its object through the use of language rather than being fully dependent on iconicity or indexicality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trichotomy III</strong></td>
<td>Involves the way a given sign is interpreted as representing its object and includes the signs of rheme, dicent and argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>rheme</strong></td>
<td>A sign that is interpreted as representing its object as a qualitative possibility. A rheme is a sign that is not judged as true or false but as something that is simply possible. Any single word, for example common nouns like ‘cat,’ ‘god,’ ‘unicorn,’ or ‘nation,’ are rhemes because they suggest the possibility of these entities without in themselves asserting the truth or falsity of that possibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Glossary of Peircean Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dicent</td>
<td>A sign which is understood to represent its object with respect to actual existence. The most important feature is that a dicent is interpreted as really being affected by its object. For example, a weather-vane is a dicent-index for 'wind direction' (object) because the wind direction actually affects the position of the weathervane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firstness</td>
<td>One of Peirce's three basic categories of phenomena, denoting something in and of itself without relation to any second entity. Firstness is &quot;the initial term in each of Peirce's three trichotomies (qualisign, icon, rheme) and Trichotomy I (of the sign itself)&quot; (Turino 1999:231).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondness</td>
<td>This phenomenological category denotes the relations between two entities without the mediation of a third. The second terms in the trichotomies (sinsign, index, dicent) and Trichotomy II (relations between sign and object) pertain to Secondness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirdness</td>
<td>The third terms in the trichotomies (legisign, symbol, argument) and Trichotomy III (how the sign is interpreted) are in the realm of Thirdness and are the most highly mediated, general signs appropriate for abstraction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary sources for this brief glossary of Peircean terms are Turino (1999), Parmentier (1987; 1994), Lewis (1993), Mertz (1985), and Peirce (in Buchler 1955; 1931-1958).
### Appendix 4: Glossary of Laban Movement Analysis Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LMA Term</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sub-category</strong></th>
<th><strong>Definition</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effort qualities</td>
<td></td>
<td>These qualities may be understood as the visible presentation of Flow, Weight, Time, and Space “that comprise all movement events, but only become apparent as qualities when a movement process engages in modification of one or more of them” (Ness 1996:150n36). Within each effort element, a “qualitative change...occurs in a range between two opposite extremes;...these extremes have been called qualities” (Dell 1977:11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow</td>
<td></td>
<td>This effort quality consists of changes “in the flow of tension [that] can be either free or bound” (Dell 1977:12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort Quality</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>This effort quality consists of changes in &quot;the quality of the weight [which] can become either light or strong&quot; (Dell 1977:12).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>This effort quality consists of changes in &quot;the quality of time [which] can become either sustained or quick&quot; (Dell 1977:12).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>This effort quality consists of changes in &quot;the quality of the spatial focus or attention, [which can be] either indirect or direct&quot; (Dell 1977:12).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape</td>
<td>&quot;How the body forms itself in space&quot;, consisting of shape flow, directional movements and shaping movements (Dell 1977:43).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape flow</td>
<td>&quot;[T]he form results only from changes within the body parts&quot; (Dell 1977:44).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directional movements</td>
<td>These movements lead to a location in space and can occur in three main patterns (see Cohen 1978:55).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arc-like movements</td>
<td>These movements seem to define a curve, such as waving to someone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoke-like movements</td>
<td>Linear movements, such as those of a boxer’s direct punch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaping</td>
<td>Describes growing and shrinking changes in body parts and as demonstrated by an expanding chest with inhalation and the subsequent shrinking of the chest during the exhalation phase of breathing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary of LMA Terms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spatial orientation</strong></td>
<td>The human body is able to utilise a three-dimensional orientation to space, and is thus able to access height, width and depth. The spatial distinctions of dimensions, planes and kinesphere assist in the description of space.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension</strong></td>
<td>A dimension travels along a linear direction from one point to another.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horizontal dimension</strong></td>
<td>Has a left-right orientation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sagittal dimension</strong></td>
<td>Has a forward-backward orientation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vertical dimension</strong></td>
<td>Has an up-down orientation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plane</strong></td>
<td>Laban developed a model of a three-dimensional cross of axes, whereby directions may be differentiated as planes, that is, as extensions of this cross (Dell 1977:69).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horizontal plane</strong></td>
<td>Contains movements along a right-to-left, or left-to-right, and forward-backward, or backward-forward, axis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sagittal plane</strong></td>
<td>Incorporates movements of both forward-backward orientation and up-down axes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vertical plane</strong></td>
<td>Includes movements of up-down, down-up and side-to-side orientation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kinesphere</strong></td>
<td>The limit of a performer's capacity to reach into space without having to leave his or her position.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body part involvement in movement</strong></td>
<td>How much the body is involved in movement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gestural</strong></td>
<td>Those movements in which only a part of the performer's body predominates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postural</strong></td>
<td>Movements employing the whole body.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Base of support | A category which provides information on the general use of the body and thereby on postural characteristics and types of weight transference.
Appendix 5: Titles of Movie Tracks and Instructions on How to Use QuickTime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CD ROM 1</th>
<th>CD ROM 2</th>
<th>CD ROM 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>advice.mov</td>
<td>attan(od)Fzb.mov</td>
<td>anthem.mov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bache.mov</td>
<td>badakhshan.mov</td>
<td>historicalatan.mov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buzkashi.mov</td>
<td>kateghaniBahark.mov</td>
<td>historicalboys'dance.mov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donkey.mov</td>
<td>kateghaniFzb.mov</td>
<td>historicalduet.mov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eidprayer.mov</td>
<td>localduet(od)Ikm.mov</td>
<td>historicalsolodance.mov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homeland.mov</td>
<td>localsolodance(od)Fzb.mov</td>
<td>kateghani1Ikm.mov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband&amp;wife.mov</td>
<td>localsolodance(od)Ikm.mov</td>
<td>kateghani2Ikm.mov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>localtune.mov</td>
<td>modernsolodance.mov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nowruzfair.mov</td>
<td>rawan.mov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrestling.mov</td>
<td>shams.mov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yaryaryar.mov</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using QuickTime on PC/Mac

If not already on your hard drive, the QuickTime program can be downloaded for free from <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>.

- Insert the required CD into the CD drive and click on the movie track that you wish to play.
- Use spacebar to start/stop the movie track. Alternatively, you can use the mouse and click on start or pause.
- To go to another track: go to Menu bar and ‘Open Movie’.
To Increase the Size of the QuickTime Movie Screen on Your Desktop

Go to ‘Movie’ on the Menu bar and then click on ‘doublesize’. Please note that if the screen is enlarged, the quality of the picture is immediately reduced (compared to the quality of the smallest screen size available).

To Reduce the Humming Noise of the CD ROM Drive and to Increase Picture and Sound quality

- Close other programs that are currently open on your computer. Copy the track(s) from the CD ROMs onto your hard drive (create a folder on your hard drive).
- To view a movie track from your hard drive, open the QuickTime program first and then go to the ‘Open Movie’ box on the File Menu.
- Select the movie track from the folder on your hard drive.


Bertel's, Andrej E. 1970. *Pjat' filosofskikh traktatov na temu "Afąq va Anfus" (O sootnošenijach meždu čelovekom i vselennoj)*. Moscow.


Burnes, Alexander. 1834. *Travels into Bokhara: Being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia; Also, Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus from the Sea to Lahore, with Presents from the King of Great Britain, Performed under the Orders of the Supreme Government of India in the Years 1831, 1832 and 1833.* London: J. Murray.


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Bibliography


Bibliography


