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

by

Bruce E. Koepke

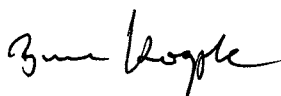
A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The Australian National University

October 2002



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 of institution.



Bruce Koepke

Date: 9 October 2002

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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)



Map 2: Afghanistan's Provinces (adapted from ReliefWeb 2001).

