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## **Sufism in Central Asia**

A Force for Moderation  
or a Cause of  
Politicization?

Martha Brill Olcott

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I am grateful to Bakhtiyar Babajianov for giving me access to some of his research materials. However, the responsibility for this text, and all the analysis within, rests solely with me, and reflects only my opinion.

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Sufism is a mystical form of Islam that has flourished in the Muslim world for centuries. Sufism has placed a distinctive stamp on the way the religion has been practiced in many Arab countries, in parts of Africa, in Turkey, and especially in Central Asia.

Like so much else in a decentralized global faith such as Islam, the practice of Sufism has varied tremendously from region to region, and even within a country or a region over time. Although each Sufi order (*tariqat*) has its own character, shaped in large part by the teachings of its founder, much of how the Sufis in the order practice the founder's teachings is shaped by the current generation of Sufi leaders.

Proponents and defenders of Sufism concentrate on the spiritual purification that the followers of the Sufi way receive, which is how believers bring themselves to the fulfillment of their faith.

Sufism offers a path to awakening and enlightenment—a personal connection to God through mystic and ascetic discipline—that attracts many Muslims. Non-Muslims, too, are sometimes attracted to the aesthetic strain of Sufism, which many see as intellectually distinct from more conventional forms of Islamic practice.

Early Sufis withdrew from society, gathering circles of followers around them and retreating to the countryside where they developed religious orders and rituals (*zikr*)<sup>1</sup> that combined Quranic recitation with physical movement prescribed by the founder of the order and elements of song (*sama*)<sup>2</sup> and dance (*raqs*), with the intended outcome being a state of ecstatic abandon. Sufism is rejected by the more conservative elements of Islam, who are put off by the unorthodox Sufi ways of prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Secular and religious critics alike often point to what they claim is the inherently political character of Sufism. Religious critics point out that the origin of each of the Sufi movements is rooted in an attack on the way Islam is practiced in the community and on the clerics responsible for these practices. The religious establishment often tries to turn the attack of the Sufis on its head. Much the way that Sufi leaders find fault with the religious establishment for being too rigid, the establishment finds fault with the way that Sufi leaders present religious teachings, complaining that it is too simplistic.

The contest between the Sufis and the religious establishment is also explicitly political because the Islam that most Sufis were rejecting or distancing themselves from was the Islam of their rulers. Most Sufi movements developed either as a protest against corrupt rulers (who ruled in the name of Islam but

did not embody its teachings) or in opposition to the legalistic formalism of worship that emphasized style over substance of faith.

The degree of politicization of Sufi movements varies from setting to setting. The history of some Sufi orders has been more characterized by open political confrontation than has the history of other orders, but a potentially political agenda is implicit in all Sufi movements.

From the eighteenth century onward, Sufi-led protest movements were often found in societies that were confronted with the encroachment of Western ideas or colonialism. Thus, rulers were either frightened by the political specter posed by Sufis or were eager to make common cause with them, depending on the circumstance. Alliances between Sufis and their rulers (both secular and religious) have also been of varying success, at least from the point of view of the governing class.

It is for this reason that a review of the history of Sufism in Central Asia in general and Uzbekistan in particular is timely. Today, as in other points in history in both Central Asia and elsewhere, local rulers are trying to figure out how best to manage challenges posed by the community of believers and whether cooperating with traditional religious elements or other critics will best serve to advance the interests of the state.

Sufism is very much a part of the history of Central Asia. Sufi leaders helped define relations between the ruler and the ruled during the time of Timurid rule. Sufis again were a source of legitimization for the rulers of the eighteenth-century khanates in the region as well as a source of mobilizing protest during the last decades of Russian colonial rule and throughout the Russian Civil War and the establishment of Soviet rule. Veneration of Sufi graves took on new importance during the years of Soviet religious persecution, making inevitable the revival of Sufism when the rebirth of Islam received state sanction during the late Soviet years and the first years of independence. Even now the entrance into the political arena of a few Sufi figures with wide popular support—including Ibrahim Hazrat<sup>4</sup> in Uzbekistan and Ismatullah Sheikh in Kazakhstan—would have considerable resonance.

But is this a revival that should be encouraged? This paper looks at the question through the lens of history and concludes that, for all its seeming harmlessness, Sufism is a very unpredictable force in Central Asia and one that is very difficult for the state to harness for its own purposes.

## Central Asia's Sufi Orders

Historically, four Sufi orders had a significant presence in the region. The Kubrawiyya, Yasawiyya, and Khwajagan Naqshbandiyya movements originated in Central Asia. Their histories are interwoven with that of Central Asia more generally. The Qadiriyya movement, which originated in Baghdad, also had followers in Central Asia. Its founder, Abd al-Qadir Jilani (1076–1166), was

originally from the Iranian city of Jilan. Another order, the Qalandariya, which in Central Asia is known as the brotherhood of wandering dervishes, is of more obscure origins, but its followers too have been found in the region.

In addition to organized Sufi orders, Central Asia has also had its share of self-taught Sufis—ascetics who preached their own personal messages of spiritual purification and who gathered followers around them.

### **Kubrawiya and Yasawiya**

The Kubrawiya brotherhood was founded by Najm ad-Din al-Kubra, who died in 1221. According to legend, he was killed defending his home town of Urgench, the capital of Khorezm, while it was under attack by the Mongols. A number of Kubrawiya leaders left distinctive marks on the political and economic history of the region. One was Sheikh Sayf ad-Din Baharzi of Bukhara, who died in 1263. He was a well-known and much respected figure of the period just after the Mongol conquest. A disciple of Najm ad-Din al-Kubra, he remained in Bukhara after it was ravaged by the Mongols. Baharzi played a key role in the economic revival of the city and used his and others' restored economic fortunes to fund the city's spiritual revival, including finding funds for the building of new madrasa. Moreover, Baharzi reached out to the local Chingisid (Mongol) governors, and his surviving correspondence with them records his efforts to appease them and to avoid other attacks on the city and the vicinity.

The Kubrawiya remained an important force in what is now western Uzbekistan and eastern Turkmenistan until the seventeenth century, by which time its structural cohesion (the linkage among religious doctrine, economic power, and political support) was almost fatally weakened. By the nineteenth century the Kubrawiya movement had almost completely disappeared, but by then most of its teachings and many of its rituals had been adopted by other Sufi groups in the region.

By contrast, the Yasawiya was a brotherhood of “common Turks,” whose ritual practices were often borrowed from their cultural and religious traditions. The movement was founded by Khoja Ahmad Yasawi, who died in 1166 in the city of Turkestan (Kazakhstan). Construction of a massive mausoleum over his grave was begun, and it achieved its state of near completion during the reign of Timur (also known as Tamerlane, who lived from 1370 to 1405). The shrine was a site of strong spiritual and historic importance during the period of the Kazakh khanate, especially for the khans of the Middle Horde, because burial there was viewed as interment in sacred ground.

Yasawi's followers emphasized the use of mysticism and the need for abstinence from worldly pleasures and amusements even more than the other Sufi groups in the region. Hence, most prominent Sufi figures were historically more focused on their spiritual dedication to God, and they largely insulated themselves from politics and the world of the powerful.

As a result, the Yasawiya were much more loosely or informally structured than some of Central Asia's other orders. Thus, Yasawiya branches relatively quickly disappeared and, though these branches sometimes revived, the effort at coordinated activity by Yasawiya leaders generally did not last long.

One exception was the period of political activity by Yasawiya sheikhs in Transoxiana (also known as Mawara an-nahr, the region between the rivers Syr and Amu) during the sixteenth century, when the sheikhs' behavior was strongly influenced by the leaders of the traditionally more active Naqshbandiya movement. Even that did not last long, and by the eighteenth century the Yasawiya brotherhood had largely disappeared from Central Asia as an organized force. Individual followers, including some who received recognition as sheikhs, were able to continue to make the Yasawiya religious tradition a continuous one up through the end of the Soviet period. Soviet antireligious policies led to the existence of a more organized and better established Yasawiya movement in Turkey than in Kazakhstan; for this reason, financing from Turkey was quick to be offered to restore the shrine of Yasawi in 1992.

In the years since independence there has been a resurgence of interest in the movement and in the formal veneration of Yasawi's shrine. The shrine is of combined national and religious significance for the Kazakh government because it allows current leaders to lay claim to the role of Kazakhstan in Central Asia's Islamic past. A Turkish university in Ankara has funded the creation of the Yasawi Kazakh-Turkish International University in the Kazakh city of Turkestan; the university's mission is to combine spirituality with contemporary education. It is permitted to operate in Kazakhstan because the government sees nothing threatening in its message.

### **Naqshbandiya in Central Asia**

The Naqshbandiya movement was founded near Bukhara by Abd al-Khaliq Ghijduvani, who lived in Ghijduvan and died sometime between 1182 and 1221. The movement, however, is associated with Ghijduvan's disciple, Baha ad-Din Naqshband, who came from Kasr-i Hinduvan near Bukhara and who was buried just beyond Bukhara in 1389. The shrine over his grave remains an important point of pilgrimage within Central Asia and for Naqshbandiya followers worldwide.

Naqshbandiya has been by far the most widespread and influential of the Central Asian Sufi movements. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, branches of Naqshbandiya had spread to most corners of the Muslim world—from Xinjiang, China, in the east to North Africa and the Balkans in the west; from the Hind peninsula in the south to the Volga River and Siberia in the north. From the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, the Naqshbandiya brotherhood was the dominant Sufi brotherhood throughout this region.

The Naqshbandiya has been the dominant Sufi brotherhood throughout Central Asian history. It alone managed to reappear in different forms again and

again after periods of stagnation. It is not surprising then that during the present Sufi revival, Naqshbandiya again has the broadest popular base. Although estimates are imprecise (and hence they vary greatly), a good conservative guess is that there are 30,000 to 40,000 Naqshbandiya followers in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Only about one-tenth of that number support the Yasawiya and Qadiriyya movements, which are concentrated mostly in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Because of the substantial literature on Naqshbandiya's doctrines, rituals, and history,<sup>5</sup> this report will instead emphasize its social and political activity. Historical precedents will help us understand Naqshbandiya's modern revival and its future trajectory, and we will note the way in which members of the Naqshbandiya have been able to transform their doctrines and in general have been able to adapt to history's evolving political environment.

Initially, Naqshbandiya was known by a different name: the Khajagan. Its founder, Abd al-Khaliq Ghijduvani was an extreme ascetic who refused to communicate with high-ranking bureaucrats and rulers except on rare occasions, when he was said to have been famously harsh. His followers attribute to him this exhortation: "Be afraid of sultans as you are afraid of lions." Ghijduvani also rejected any accumulation of wealth.

For the first five or six generations, the brotherhood did not reach beyond the Bukhara oasis, and little distinguished it from dozens of similar brotherhoods. According to Naqshbandiya written tradition, however, a Khajaganiya sheikh named Sayyid Amir Kulal (who died in 1371) was one of the first Sufi leaders to inspire Timur (Tamerlane) to conquer Transoxiana and create an empire.

Whether or not this is true (it is not confirmed in historic chronicles), it became symbolic for future leaders of the brotherhood. Future generations cited this as the historic precedent that supported and legitimized their political activities.

More certain is the fact that the structural formation of Naqshbandiya began with Sayyid Amir Kulal. The formation was represented by the appearance of hierarchy among the successors (*khalifalar*), disciples (*murid*), and followers (*mublis*) of a head teacher (*murshid*).

Sayyid Amir Kulal's disciple Baha ad-Din Naqshband (who died in 1389) became the second father figure of the brotherhood, which adopted his name. His main contribution was the addition of his famous "Four Statutes" to the brotherhood's doctrine. These statutes rejected extreme asceticism and carried a world-affirming ethos. As such, they became the foundation of a new kind of social activity.

Baha ad-Din Naqshband's most famous statute allows for seclusion within society (*khalwat dar anjuman*). In other words, adherents are not required to leave the society or to isolate themselves from it, but they may seek seclusion within their hearts, where God alone must live. At the same time, adherents are urged to participate actively in the life of the community—trading, manufacturing,

and farming—as they contemplate God constantly in their hearts. This statute was very important to the brotherhood because it became the foundation for future theorists of the brotherhood, and it created the preconditions for the movement’s political and economic influence.

Also, Baha ad-Din Naqshband did much to enlarge the social foundation of the brotherhood, bringing in new members who were craftsmen, merchants, and common peasants. The Naqshbandiya process of initiation was less rigorous than for other brotherhoods. Instead of a complex series of spiritual exercises and lengthy seclusion, initiation for Naqshbandiya involved only “extending one’s hand” to the sheikh and repenting of one’s sins; this was to be followed by completing a lesson on how to commemorate God. After joining, new brothers were sworn to continue to perform *zikr* (an act of remembering God) while they remained part of society and carried on their everyday business.

The same process of initiation continues to this day. Initiation takes less than an hour. Later, a *murid* may visit his teacher from time to time (bringing a present or some money [*nazr*]) to talk about his spiritual state before and after *zikr* and to discuss his dreams. The simplification of the initiation process and the spiritual exercises widened the social and ethnic base of the Naqshbandiya and made it the most popular brotherhood in the region, which contributed to its permanent revival as well as to its geographical expansion.

No trustworthy record exists of the political activities of Baha ad-Din Naqshband himself although the later written tradition of Naqshbandiya does attribute to him some communications with Timur.

After Baha ad-Din Naqshband, the next most influential person in the history of the movement was Khoja Ubaydallah Ahrar (1404—1489).<sup>6</sup> Sufi scholars in Central Asia pay special attention to Khoja Ahrar for several reasons. First, he initiated the politicization of the Naqshbandiya brotherhood in Transoxiana, a politicization that was possible only because of the brotherhood’s unprecedented popularity that resulted from its simple initiation and relaxed conditions of membership.

## Politicization of Sufism in Central Asia

All modern Naqshbandiya sheikhs in Central Asia, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Iraq, and elsewhere begin the chain of their spiritual succession (*silsilah*) with Khoja Ahrar. Khoja Ahrar served as a model of a Sufi sheikh who served as a politically influential leader and so set that precedent for those who followed him. Ahrar’s example is critical because, ever since, powerful Naqshbandiya sheikhs have felt the imperative of at least considering direct political engagement if they wanted to be true to some of the central teachings of their order.

For many Muslims in the region, Khoja Ahrar represents a just defender of the poor—a Sufi Robin Hood—who was prepared to overthrow any ruler in the name of defending a just Sharia. His tomb in Khwaja-yi Kafshir, a village

approximately four kilometers east of Samarkand, has always been a popular pilgrimage destination. Even during Soviet-imposed atheism, the mosque adjacent to his tomb was never closed because the authorities feared the public outcry that would have resulted from such an action.<sup>7</sup> Today's political establishment in Uzbekistan grants considerable respect to Khoja Ahrar, but the more the Uzbek authorities have learned about Khoja Ahrar's ideas, the more uncomfortable they have become about elevating him as a national hero.

Khoja Ahrar's jubilee was 2004. According to a special resolution of the Uzbekistan Cabinet of Ministers, such Uzbek jubilee celebrations were to include an international conference and be recognized internationally. When a detailed memo on Khoja Ahrar's activity as a political leader, including a complete outline of his political credo, was submitted to the Presidential Council two months before the events were to take place, the jubilee events were postponed twice. Finally, the government decided to limit the jubilee celebrations to a small conference, without foreign experts, in Samarkand at the beginning of December 2004.

Khoja Ahrar's religious justification for politicization of the brotherhood's activity was clear:

The times have worsened, and therefore, the best deed is to be with the court of the ruler, so that one can help the people and the repressed. . . . One should go to the rulers having raised the religion of the prophets to its limits, so that their throne and crown appeared insignificant compared to the eminence of the faith.

In Sufi fashion, Khoja Ahrar offers his objections in a way that sets up the Sufi leadership to serve as mediators between the people and the authorities.

Khoja Ahrar was highly critical of elevating *adat* law (customary law, the law of the steppe) to be the law of the state, superseding Islamic laws (based on the Quran and the hadiths). He was also a strong critic of the ruinous civil wars among the Timurids; these wars forced the ruling elite to impose additional taxes—secular taxes not based on the Sharia—on the people.

Although those who came after Khoja Ahrar tried to explain his life and works to their own advantage, it is clear from these varying accounts that Khoja Ahrar was the first spiritual authority to push for the submission of state and legal norms to Islamic laws. Khoja Ahrar advocated the establishment of a state order based on religious, or Sharia, rules. To achieve this, he believed a ruler should be well versed in Islamic laws and, more important, should follow them.

Khoja Ahrar's biographers suggest that in his relations with rulers he most often used the technique of pacification from the position of force, supported by his own economic might and the might of his supporters as well as his authority as a spiritual leader.

It is true that Khoja Ahrar was a spokesman for a group of clerics who seemed to have enjoyed the wide support of merchants, craftsmen, and other strata of the population. His goal was the realization of the Islamic Sharia doctrine in

politics as a much needed antidote to the so-called heretical model introduced by the Turko-Mongol rulers who were in power after the Chingisid conquest. This was a new and, to a certain degree, unusual function for a Sufi sheikh: putting himself forward as a political leader who was in clear opposition to any non-Islamic state or legal order.

Another important innovation introduced to Naqshbandiya by Khoja Ahrar was the concept of a single regional leader of the brotherhood (*pishva-ye tariqat*). Having unified all small brotherhoods under the control of a single leader, Khoja Ahrar created this position, which strengthened the order institutionally and gave it the characteristics of a well-organized order, with a clearly defined hierarchy. Any attempts at independence on the part of petty sheikhs were severely punished.

Khoja Ahrar also introduced a new ethical norm that stipulated that the sheikh and members of the brotherhood could and should be wealthy although he warned that they should have “their hearts not tied to their wealth.” This peculiar capitalism with an ethical twist gave impetus to the economic activity of the brotherhood. From then on, many sheikhs of the brotherhood were among the wealthiest people of Transoxiana.

The politicization of the Naqshbandiya was a reaction to violations of Sharia governing norms by the Timurids (1470–1506) that were further exacerbated by interdynastic feuds and armed confrontations, but the changed conditions in the region were not enough to lead to the politicization of local Sufi ideology. It took a figure with the depth of religious learning and the vision of Khoja Ahrar to find a way to incorporate in Sufi teachings both the need and the means of responding to the rulers’ flouting of Sharia law. After Khoja Ahrar, the history of Naqshbandiya became more like a narrative of the political activities of the heads of Sufi clans than of a spiritual and philosophical movement.

Starting in the sixteenth century, leaders of other Transoxiana brotherhoods under the influence of Naqshbandiya started to become active in politics although they lagged behind the Naqshbandiya sheikhs. The politicization of Central Asia’s various Sufi movements also led to competition among brotherhoods and even among Naqshbandiya leaders. That struggle often seemed more of a political struggle among high-ranking officials than a fight among Sufi leaders to attract followers.

## **Influence of Sufism in Central Asia**

The importance of Sufism to the lives of the people of Central Asia and to the governments of the region has waxed and waned over the centuries.

### **Alliance with Government, Factionalism, and Decline**

The Sufi brotherhoods’ high-profile role—especially the Naqshbandiya—in Central Asian society led to a sharp increase in converts to Sufism and

enhancements of its leaders' influence. This in turn contributed to its geographical expansion throughout the Islamic world. In many ways, though, the politicization of Sufism and the new political role played by prominent Sufi sheikhs also led to the deterioration of the movement and to the introduction of the very element of spiritual decay that these orders were created to root out of Islam. As politically influential Sufi dynasties—including the lines that followed Khoja Ahrar and Makhdum-i Azam (who died in 1542) as well as the Juybari sheikhs (important authorities to the Naqshbandi Order and spiritual leaders of the Shaibanids) in Bukhara whose progenitor was Khoja Islam (who died in 1563)—started to develop close personal ties with the families of ruling dynasties, they ceased being capable of independent political activity.

Thus, the politicization of Sufism in Transoxiana led to its becoming a state-like structure, and, like the Central Asian states of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries themselves, this insured that the Sufi movements would suffer the same kind of stagnation that characterized the khanates.

With time, Naqshbandiya's social engagement and drive for internal reform ceased to strengthen and expand the brotherhood and instead became sources of crisis and stagnation. Even in Khoja Ahrar's lifetime, his sons competed for the title of "head sheikh." In that struggle each was supported by a different civil ruler, which caused fights within the brotherhood to turn into political crises that led to armed conflicts within the Timurid dynasty. At the same time, the brotherhood was turning away from many of its original basic ethical and spiritual norms, diminishing its popularity.

Politicization came at the expense of the emphasis on morality and spirituality that defined early Sufism, and this too served as a source of stagnation of the Naqshbandiya and the other brotherhoods in Central Asia. In addition, the training of *murids* had been attenuated, meaning that even more of the old traditions fell by the wayside. These changes further weakened the organizational structure of brotherhoods and promoted their merger with the state.

As has been true of so many politicized Islamic religious figures, most pro-establishment Sufi leaders, and especially those from Naqshbandiya brotherhood even though they had become de facto officials by then, claimed to be the only true defenders of Sharia.

### Revival in the Eighteenth Century

Much of the credit for the Naqshbandiya's eventual revival in the middle of the eighteenth century was due largely to the vibrancy of its Indian branch—Mujaddidiya—and its leader, Ahmad Sirhindi (who died in 1624). Sirhindi was known as "*mujaddad alf as-sani*" (reformer of the second millennium) because he lived at the beginning of the second millennium of the Muslim chronology.

Sirhindi studied with Transoxianian followers of the Naqshbandiya and with the sheikhs of Qadiriyya in India, and he learned to combine their ritual practices. He borrowed the traditions of social and political activity and links of

basic spiritual succession from the Transoxianian Naqshbandiya. At the time of Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya's golden age in India, in the middle of the eighteenth century, Sufism in Transoxiana was stagnant, which gave Mujaddidiya room to spread north.

Mujaddidiya was effectively a reformed (*mujaddad*) version of the Naqshbandiya brotherhood. The old process repeated itself: the brotherhood simplified its rituals, widened its social base, and reengaged in the political and economic life of the community.

But then, as before, the creation of this broader, more diverse group led to the relaxation of the established strict ethical norms and Sufi statutes and created a widening gap between the leaders and disciples. Another struggle for power within the brotherhood quickly became fused with the competition among ruling dynasties. Thus, the pattern of the early period was repeated.

Co-optation by the regimes led to declining popularity and eventually to stagnation and, in many cases, even to the complete breakup of Sufi orders into separate branches and small groups.

### Sufism under Colonial Rule

The second period of stagnation led to an extreme simplification of Sufi doctrines and rituals. Even in this context, small, unrelated groups of Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya continued to exert influence over local communities, as most rituals carried out by local Muslims were Sufi rituals. But the ability of the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya for asserting political influence over the ruling elite was seriously diminished, as was their ability to lead coordinated political activities.

Nonetheless, during the period of Russian imperial rule, Sufi leaders were able to exert their political and social influence to mobilize popular dissatisfaction. A small riot, known as the Aftobachi uprising, was organized under the Sufi banner in the Ferghana Valley in 1875-1876. Its leader, Makhtum Aftobachi, came from an impoverished Sufi clan.

Far more disruptive to Russian plans was the 1898 uprising in Andijan that was led by Dukchi Ishan, a disciple of a provincial sheikh, Sultan-khan-tura. Dukchi Ishan's full name was Muhammad-Ali (Madali) Sabir.<sup>8</sup> He was most likely born in 1850 or 1851 in the Shahidan settlement (near Margilan) to a family of a hereditary manufacturer of spindles (*dukchi*, *iyikchi*), from which he took his nickname. In his youth, he accompanied his father to Samarkand and Bukhara, where he was left with local mullahs and taught the basics of Arabic grammar and reading of the Quran. When he was about fifteen or sixteen years old, he became a *murid* of the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya sheikh, Sultan-khan-tura, in a settlement called Tajik (near Margilan).

Dukchi Ishan wrote that at the age twenty-six he received *irshad* (instruction) from his *pir*.<sup>9</sup> Two years later, he was "raised to a white felt" by the closest followers of Sultan-khan-tura: this was a ritual in which Dukchi Ishan was

recognized as *khalifa* (spiritual successor) of his teacher and acquired a spiritual connection (*nisbat*) with the sheikhs of the brotherhood.

Dukchi Ishan moved to Mingtepa (35 kilometers southeast of Andijan) with several disciples of his deceased *murshid*. They brought with them the remains of Sultan-khan-tura, whose descendants were able to return these remains to his home village.

When he was approximately thirty-four years old, Dukchi Ishan performed hajj. After a year of living in Mecca, he returned to Mingtepa where he set up his *khanaqa* (Sufi center or cloister) that included a mosque, a school, a library, a room for guests, a kitchen, and a stable. These were built with the help of resources of his followers and *murids*. The *khanaqa* became a magnet for many who were critical of the Russian colonial authorities and those who served in the local bodies of “self-administration” (including *qazi* [religious rather than civil] courts).

Initially Dukchi Ishan was against any call to immediate action or suggestions that local Russian settlers should be attacked. In fact he initially pressed hard for order, claiming that only universal *ghazavat* (a form of holy war that is always armed, and has specific preconditions) would change the political situation. With time, and in the absence of other political outlets, support for Dukchi Ishan grew in other cities and villages of the Ferghana Valley, and Dukchi Ishan appointed formal deputies to manage the “affairs of brothers” (*yaran*). Gradually, in the face of deteriorating economic conditions, in particular, Dukchi Ishan’s position toward *ghazavat* began to change.

Archival evidence survives of a meeting of *murids* in Osh district (of which the Andijan region was a part) held in early 1898, in which Dukchi Ishan was announced a successor of (*khalifa*) Allah’s messenger, with a right to declare *ghazavat* and with the duty of “decreeing the right conduct and banning reprehensible conduct” (*al-amr bi-l-maruf va-n-nabii an al-munkar*). Dukchi Ishan changed this document to call himself “*khalifa* of master Umar ibn al-Khattab (Al-Faruk),” and, like the master, Dukchi Ishan also was intending to “wage justice.”

On the basis of this document, Dukchi Ishan made an appeal for *ghazavat* against Russian rule that was sent to elders of Uzbek and Kyrgyz clans and even to several officials in the local government. Although many expressed sympathy with Dukchi Ishan’s ideas, most who received the appeal either demanded more time for the preparation of *ghazavat* or rejected the appeal altogether.

For Dukchi Ishan to gain strong clerical support for formally and violently opposing Russian rule, he would have had to surmount the local feeling that he was going too far, too fast. One of the local historians of the time, Mirza Sami, wrote of Dukchi Ishan’s “hasty speech” and that he had “violated the fatwa on peace with the White Czar, brought much harm to Muslims, and became a root of unrest and disorder among them.”

Dukchi Ishan sensed that most of his support came from the nomadic and agricultural populations of the Ferghana Valley—the Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and

Uygurs—whom he represented. Dukchi Ishan openly criticized representatives of local “new bourgeoisie,” the *bais* (large landowners), the ulema (local clerics), and representatives of hereditary spiritual clans and clergy (*ishans, khojas, and sayyids*), thereby depriving the rebellion of their possible support and dooming it to failure.

Dukchi Ishan’s appeal for *ghazavat* against Russian rule was circulated about six weeks before the actual attack, but this did not provide enough time to attract broad-based support. An attack nonetheless took place, making use of a local population that had been provided with strong religious incentives for the planned actions.

Driven by a desire to legalize the status of their *murshid* as the “main *ghazi*,” the *murids* of Dukchi Ishan conducted a ceremony of his “ascension to khan” (*khan kutarilish*) a day before setting out (May 17, 1898). On the one hand, this action reflected their aspiration to reconstitute an Islamic state in place of the Kokand khanate that had been defeated by the Russians in 1876; on the other hand, it demonstrated that the notions (based on the laws of the steppe) of their right to a legally designated khan were still strong for those who took inspiration from Dukchi Ishan.

Dukchi Ishan personally took part in attacks on the Russian army barracks in Andijan. This uprising in Andijan, because it was led by a Naqshbandiya sheikh, was the closest that Central Asia came to the Sufi-inspired ferment in Kashgar and in the North Caucasus. Dukchi Ishan’s uprising quickly failed, and its organizers, including Dukchi Ishan, tried to flee to Kashgar but were captured on route. The Naqshbandiya leader was tried and hanged, along with six of his closest supporters.

The authorities then gathered up the library of Dukchi Ishan’s *khanaqa*. These manuscripts and lithographic editions, approximately 300 volumes in all, eventually made their way to the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, which has given contemporary scholars access to them. Thus, scholars have been able to learn about the level of religious knowledge in the Naqshbandiya of Central Asia in the late colonial period. Most of the books are literary works on *fiqh*, books of madrasa, and Sufi hagiography, but the library also contains Dukchi Ishan’s own *Ibrat al-ghafilin*, written in rhymed prose in the Ferghana dialect of Uzbek.

The text of *Ibrat al-ghafilin* focused on the moral decline of Muslims, who Dukchi Ishan said had stopped following religious injunctions and forgot about Sharia in favor of the unsanctioned innovations (*bidat*) that had become more popular than what Dukchi Ishan called the “beliefs of fathers.”

This prompted Dukchi Ishan to explain to his followers, who were not aware of elementary requirements of the Sharia, the basics of rituals (including ablution, prayers, and fasting) in order to reconcile non-Muslim (from the viewpoint of the author) customs and the way of life of compatriots with the Sharia. Clearly, Dukchi Ishan also aspired to stimulate a sense of struggle among his

supporters, the *ghazi*, not only for the “land and pastures of fathers and grandfathers,” but also for the “beliefs of ancestors.”

*Ibrat al-ghafilin* is one of the final works of the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya literature of the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries whose authors collectively tried to turn Sharia into a single law and the norm of life of Muslims. Uzbek scholars of Islam view Dukchi Ishan’s knowledge of religious studies and Sufi scholarship, as represented by this book, as mediocre. Some even question whether *Ibrat al-ghafilin* should be considered a work of Sufi thought or simply a religious tract.

But there is no question about the political nature of Dukchi Ishan’s message. The community around him consisted mostly of peasants who had been victimized by the czars’ migration policy as Russians arrived and took over much of the peasants’ land. It made sense, then, that the local peasantry would use the Sufi call to defend Sharia to seek religious recourse and protection against the Russians. The community established around Dukchi Ishan can be described as a Sufi community only in the sense that it reflected the major transformations that had occurred in Sufism, especially in the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya movement. This change drove society in only one direction: turning Sharia into the cornerstone of Sufism and making Sharia the only law that pervaded all aspects of Muslim life.

Sufism provided anticolonial movements with a formal organizational structure, formed over Sufism’s centuries-long existence and based on the absolute submission of a disciple to his teacher (*murid* to *murshid*). But, in Central Asia during the Russian colonial period, this relationship between religion and social protest led to an outcome that was antithetical to Dukchi Ishan’s aspirations for spreading Sufism among Muslims. Instead, the Naqshbandiya’s reaction to Russian colonization led to Sharia being discounted, Muslims’ rights limited, and the faith weakened.

The history of the Andijan uprising creates a historical precedent of great potential importance for the Uzbek population today. Unlike the Basmachi revolt during the time of the Russian Civil War, when the linkage of religion to the political ferment in the region was difficult to firmly establish, the revolt of Dukchi Ishan was an explicitly religious response to a wide variety of social, economic, and political challenges.

It is probably because of the peculiar duality of Dukchi Ishan’s legacy—as a fighter for national independence and as a supporter of restoration of the Islamic state of the times of four righteous *khalifalar*—that Uzbek authorities rethought their original plans to mark the centenary of the Andijan rebellion in 1998.

After the suppression of the uprising led by Dukchi Ishan, the Russian government treated Sufism with extreme suspicion. The Russians were afraid of new uprisings under Sufi banners and so tried to further weaken Sufi groups economically, which they were able to do largely through reviewing the status

of *waqf*, tax-exempt real estate that belonged to religious institutions and individuals. Beginning in the late 1860s with the introduction of a formal colonial administration, the institution of *waqf* land began to be scrutinized and restricted, and the clerical establishment was stripped of the right to accumulate new land. Over time, the status of the existing *waqf* lands began to be scrutinized as well.

Russian officials undertook a review of *waqf* and introduced changes that deprived almost all Sufi *khanaqas* of their real estate. Prominent Sufi leaders also lost the clerical status assigned to their own property. Between 1900 and 1902, even Khoja Ahrar's descendants in Samarkand were stripped of the *waqf* status of their various properties.

*Vaqf* land had included property deeded to religious orders by their followers, both as gifts and as in-kind-payment of *zakat* (taxes), as well as the real estate on which mosques, schools, and other religious buildings were situated. As a result, many religious orders held agricultural lands equal in size to those of large individual landowners, but, unlike the landowners, their property and the income it produced was tax exempt.

Thus, through taxation the Russians tried to promote further disintegration of Sufi groups and the economic weakening of its institutions and figures of authority. The imperial coffers, of course, benefited through the accumulation of lands that could be sold.

On the eve of the Russian Revolution, Sufism was no longer a united and structurally solid movement in Central Asia. This was true even in the emirate of Bukhara and the khanate of Khiva, protectorates not directly administered by the Russians.

Despite Russian policies, a kind of religious aristocracy did remain in Central Asia. Most local Sufi figures of authority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were descendants of Sufi family clans. In the Ferghana Valley, they were descendants of Makhdum-i Azam; in Samarkand and Bukhara, of Khoja Ahrar or the Juybari sheikhs. Descendants of these families and clans were and still are called *khoja*, *khoja-zadeh*, or *ishans*. They were and still are considered heirs (*barakat*) of their ancestors. They were privately tutored, usually in their relatives' homes, and were educated in Sharia studies (Quran, hadith, dogma, *fiqh*).

Members of these clans, known as *ak suyak* (white bone), only marry members of other high-ranking families. During Soviet times, they played a significant role in the preservation of Sufism, its traditions, and its rituals, but they did not reach out beyond their immediate narrow circles because self-preservation was viewed as more important than trying to spread the Sufi way. Most of today's prominent clerical families in Central Asia, whether or not the current generation of leaders adheres to the Sufi way, also are white bone.<sup>10</sup>

Some smaller groups (Mujaddidiya, Qalandariya, and Qadiriyya) remained active in Bukhara and in Surkhandarya, Karategin, Hisar—territories that had

been transferred to the emirate of Bukhara at the time that protectorate status was negotiated.

A number of highly regarded Sufi figures remained, including Mavlana Imlavi and Khoja Kirmani in Bukhara, and Ishan It-Yimas and Abdurrahmanjon-sufi in Tashkent. In Andijan a group was led by Mavlana Makhdum, himself a descendant of Makhdum-i Azam. One of its members, Madamin Beg, later headed the longest armed resistance to the Red Army troops as part of the Basmachi movement. But Madamin Beg himself was not a Sufi leader of any particular spiritual standing.

### Sufism Under Soviet Rule

Central Asian Muslims often made much of the religious element in the Basmachi resistance to the introduction of Bolshevik rule, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) celebrates the Basmachi movement as a major part of the history of jihad in Central Asia. Religion might have been a key element in stimulating the resistance, but only a few of the military leaders came from Sufi *ishans*. Most leaders of large numbers of Basmachi troops came from ordinary families. More often, leaders of resistance groups added *Amir al-muminin* to their names, emphasizing that they were marching under the banner of jihad. It was certainly true, though, that the Basmachi fighters enjoyed a great deal of support—both moral and financial—from Central Asia's religious establishment.

But the victory of the Bolsheviks ensured the further deterioration of the Sufi movement in Central Asia, as it was now fully stripped of its economic means of survival. Between 1922 and 1928 the institution of *vaqf* lands was first outlawed and then was subjected to formal nationalization procedures. This dealt a serious blow to fading Sufi *khanaqas* as centers of organizational structure. Sufi *khanaqas* (also *zawiyah*) were the first to lose their *vaqf* status and were closed down. Many Sufi sheikhs fled to remote regions or, more often, to Afghanistan, Kashgar (in western China), and other Muslim countries.<sup>11</sup>

Those Sufi sheikhs who remained were persecuted, arrested, deported, and sometimes executed during the subsequent antireligion campaigns.<sup>12</sup> Some of them, although very few, managed to survive and secretly teach individual disciples during Khrushchev's thaw. To survive, they fled to provincial regions of the former Bukhara khanate. They returned to their hometowns only after Stalin's death, and not all of them managed to educate disciples.

Yet their biographies are worth considering, as these men did keep the tradition of learning alive through their writings as well as through their teachings. These men did not simply advocate the veneration of shrines, as did most self-proclaimed Soviet-era Sufis. Three Naqshbandiya sheikhs can be noted: Ravnaqi, his nephew Faqiri, and Ahmadjon Makhdum. Good biographical material is available for two of these three men in a four-volume work on Islam,<sup>13</sup> and material on Haji Ahmadjon Makhdum can be found in his newly published autobiography.<sup>14</sup>

**Ravnaqi.** Faizallah Ravnaqi Makhdum Khojaev Shakhrisabzi (1892–1978), also known as Faid Allah, came from a family of *qadis* (judges), was also a lawyer, a poet, and the author of essays on the history of the Sufi brotherhoods. He was born in Shakhrisabz and was educated in the Kukeltash madrassa in Bukhara (he completed his education in 1919 or 1920), after which he was appointed *qadi* of Shakhrisabz. After the liquidation of the Sharia courts, Ravnaqi took various jobs in the re-created judicial bodies that tried to harmonize newly adopted laws with some norms of the Sharia. To avoid negative consequences of rapid secularization, Soviet authorities invited former *qadis* to consult in preparing new civil and criminal codes so that Sharia norms could be taken into account on a formal level. This situation did not appear to satisfy Ravnaqi, and he returned to Shakhrisabz by 1931.

During the antireligious campaign of the Soviets, Ravnaqi hid his archive and library and fled to a remote region of Tajikistan, where he made his living through odd jobs and traditional healing. He returned to Shakhrisabz in the late 1950s, when he was able to turn his attention to his religious writings.

Ravnaqi is the author of about ten books of essays of various kinds, including several small treatises on the history of Sufi brotherhoods, the best known of which are *Risala-yi tarikat-i Ishkiya*, *Risala-i Chishtiya*, and *Risala-yi Jakhriya-yi Yasawiyas*, which focus on the technique of Sufi rituals. His writings also provide details of the burial sites of famous Sufi sheikhs of the Kashkadarya valley and the objects contained in their burial sites.

Ravnaqi is also well known for his essays on *fiqh*. He had a passion for the traditional epistolary style, and he preserved letters of members of the ruling dynasties of Bukhara from the fifteenth century onward, with an especially rich collection of letters from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. In addition, Ravnaqi was a gifted poet. His early poems, written under the pseudonym Ramzi, were included in a collection of poems by prominent poets of Bukhara that was published on the eve of the Russian Revolution.

It was not until 1997 that scholars and disciples gained access to Ravnaqi's library, which, in addition to his own essays and samples of his calligraphy work, includes more than one hundred volumes of manuscripts on various issues of theology and *fiqh*, Sufi treatises, and poetic collections, including many that Ravnaqi rewrote with his own calligraphy. In addition, the library contains approximately five hundred lithographic works on the same subjects that were issued in India, Arab countries, Samarkand, Novo-Bukhara (Kagana), Tashkent, and Russia. The library also has books of legal decisions (*daftar*) from the office of the Shakhrisabz *qadi*, which were written not only in Shakhrisabz but also in other cities of the Bukhara emirate. Ravnaqi's personal collection is preserved by his descendants in Shakhrisabz, and the street on which he lived has been named after him.

Ravnaqi also had a living legacy. Beginning in the 1960s, he organized his own *hujra* (underground religious school) and gave private lessons on reading

Quran (*qiraat*), on poetry writing, and on calligraphy. He also continued to practice traditional methods of healing, using spells (*ruqia/dam solmoq*) and writing special recipes for herbal infusions. Copies of some of his recipes (sometimes in reference to medieval medical treatises) have been preserved in his archive in the form of special messages to his relatives and acquaintances.

Ravnaqi died in Shakhrisabz in 1978 and is buried in the suburban cemetery of Arslanbab. His grave is a place of pilgrimage for his descendants, disciples, and admirers.

**Faqiri.** The Sufi poet Ismail bin Ibrahim-khoja Shakhrisabzi (1910–1980) used the pseudonym Faqiri. Faqiri, Ravnaqi's nephew, was born in the village of Sarasia in the Kitab district of Kashkadarya oblast into an old family of judges. One founder of this family was Mirak-shah-khoja, who served as a *qadi* for Abd al-Aziz-Khan II (1645–1681) in Balkh. The family was a distinguished one, and even its women received a good theological education. Many women of the family served as *otin-oyi* (women with religious training who have some religious standing in the community).

Faqiri left a copy of his personal genealogy that described how Najm ad-din-khoja, one of the notable figures of the family, was taken captive during the World War II and appointed as a mullah (against his will) in the Turkestani legion of the German army. At the end of the war, Najm ad-din-khoja managed to flee, but, in accordance with Soviet practice, he was court-martialed and sentenced to 25 years of exile.

Faqiri's father, Ibrahim-haji (who died in 1914) simultaneously served as imam-*khatib* in the Juma mosque in Shakhrisabz (which had been built by Ulugh Beg during the 1432–1436 period), as a representative of the emir in the city administration (*uraq*), and as head (*mudarris*) of the local madrassa at which Faqiri began his studies.

After Soviet authorities closed the madrassa, Faqiri continued his education with his grandmother, who was an *otin-oyi*. Then he went to study with Ravnaqi.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Faqiri became a *murid* of a popular Naqshbandiya sheikh of the time, Katta-haji Dahbidi, who was a descendant of Sheikh Makhdum-i Azam (deceased in 1542). Despite the fact that in the mid-1930s Katta-haji was exiled from his native Dahbid of the Kashkadarya oblast and banned from gathering *murids*, he continued to teach Faqiri with the help of written instructions.

Some of these instructions are preserved in letters found in Faqiri's archives, and they serve as interesting samples of Sufi instructions (*tanbih*). Faqiri also corresponded with the son of his teacher, Muhiy ad-din-khoja Dahbidi, and at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s his correspondence broadened still further to include a number of Central Asia's most authoritative ulema, among them domulla Muhammadjan Hindustani, who was himself a practitioner of

the Sufi way but who focused most of his attention on the preservation of the basic tenets of the Hanafi legal tradition.

Katta-haji's letters included dogmatic questions and the sequence of performing some Sufi rituals and their mandatory (*farḍ*) or voluntary (*nafl*) interpretations; they were mandatory for members of stable Sufi communities.

Faqiri himself adhered to the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya tradition of "quiet" *zīkr* (*haḥfi*), which was based on concentrating attention on focused points of a body (*nuqtalar*) or psycho-spiritual organs (*lataif*) of the body. Each one of them (or their combination) had a specific name, which corresponded to one of the phases of *zīkr* (*qalb, rukh, sirr, haḥfi, akhḥfa, sultan*) and methods of spiritual concentrations (*rabīta, tawajjuh, naḥfi-yi isbat, muraqaba-yi khahfi*). Concentration on each one of these points (or a group of points) was accompanied by a mental iteration of Allah's words or a formula of the belief's symbols (*Lailaha illa-Llahu*) a number of times.

Faqiri had a few disciples whom he taught theoretical problems of Sufism as well as the ritual practice (*zīkr, tawajjuh*). He did not give appropriate documents (*Irshad-nameh* or *Khatt-i irshad*) to any of his *murids*, however, because he believed that his interrupted education barred him from gaining a solid spiritual connection (*nisbat*) in the Sufi studies. Thus, he believed he could teach but he had no right to prepare his successor (*khalifa*).

Faqiri is an author of several essays of various genres although it is not clear that his complete body of works has been preserved. His known writings include a collection (*divan*) of mystical poems in Tajik and Uzbek languages as well as Sufi treatises (*risala*) that are mainly dedicated to the peculiarities of a ritual in various local brotherhoods or their histories (including *Risala-yi tariq-i zīkr, Risala-yi tariqat-i suluk, and Risala-yi tariqat-i Kubraviyya*). His writings also included his own versions of folk tales told at women's ritual gatherings.

Blind toward the end of his life, Faqiri became a recluse and rarely took part in gatherings of the local Sufi community at Muslim festivals. He died in his native Sarasia and was buried in a local cemetery. His grave almost instantly became an object of pilgrimage for the local population.

Faqiri's descendants have preserved a part of his library, about thirty volumes of manuscripts (mainly Sufi essays and an incomplete collection of letters) and essays on *fiqh* and *kalam* (the science of seeking Islamic principles through the use of the dialectic).

**Ahmadjon Makhdum.** Ahmadjon Makhdum Mujaddidi was born in 1939 in the village of Zarkon (sometimes written Zar-i kon), in the Sarasia region of Surkhandarya oblast. He was the great grandson of Ashur Hisari (who died in the middle of the nineteenth century), who was a very well known Mujaddidiya sheikh in eastern Bukhara. Ahmadjon Makhdum's father, Makhdum-qori, studied in Bukhara with several Mujaddidiya sheikhs, but he never had any formal students. Nonetheless he succeeded in teaching Sufi rituals to his son who,

at the age of six, began receiving formal religious instruction, including how to read Arabic. Although Ahmadjon Makhdum never completed even seventh grade in secular schools, he was taught a religious curriculum that was little changed from what had been taught in the prerevolutionary period.

After studying with his father, Ahmadjon Makhdum went off to study with Muhammad Bobo-yi in Sarasia and with Qozi-domullah (who died in 1966 at age 99). Qozi-domullah, one of Muhammadjan Hindustani's closest associates, was born and lived most of his life in Ferghana, eventually seeking safe haven in Dushanbe, where he died. Ahmadjon Makhdum also studied with a number of well known Sufis, including Makhdum Bob-yi Andaki from the village of Andak in Samarkand oblast, with Ishan Abdurrahmanjon from the village of Qala-yi naw near Dushanbe (Ishan Abdurrahmanjon died in 1971 at the age of 89), and with Ishan Sheikh Asadullah, also from Qala-yi naw (who died in 1980).

Ahmadjon Makhdum left no formal disciples although many gathered around him to learn Mujaddidiya *ziker*. Ibrahim Hazrat is one of the contemporary figures who learned *ziker* from him. In 1992, Ahmadjon Makhdum also came into close contact with Sheikh Ahmad Zulfikar Naqshbandi Mujaddidi, from Lahore, Pakistan, and when Sheikh Zulfikar visited Ahmadjon Makhdum at home many followers from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also arrived, which gives testimony to Ahmadjon's legacy among a whole generation of Hanafi clerics from Surkhandarya and from Tajikistan. Ahmadjon Makhdum's religious tracts show that he had a classical understanding of Sufism. Knowledge of Sufism could not be separated from knowledge of Sharia. His view was that of a religious elitist: Sufism could not be allowed to fall into the hands of the "dirty dervishes."

**Others of importance during the Soviet period.** Only a handful of individuals with formal learning of Sufism survived the Soviet period, and each learned person produced only a limited number of students. The Naqshbandiya sheikhs in particular were concerned with the preservation of the traditions of written study.

A number of influential Naqshbandiya sheikhs during the Soviet period did manage to train disciples, although biographical material about them is limited. One was Abduwahid Sheikh, also known as Eshon-bobo, who lived in Kushata village, about 15 kilometers from Turkestan. Although Abduwahid Sheikh died early in the Soviet period, after World War I, his most notable disciple and successor was Abdullah qori, who lived in Tashkent and died in 1978. Abdullah qori was himself the teacher of such prominent postindependence sheikhs as Ibrahim Hazrat (of Kokand, Uzbekistan), Odil-khon Sheikh (of Andijan), and Nasrulloh Sheikh (who died in Tashkent in 2003).

Another well-known sheikh, Abdurrahmanjon Ishan, of Qala-yi naw, near Dushanbe, lived for nearly a century (1885–1984). His best known student

was Ahmadjon Makhдум Mujaddidi, who was profiled above. Khofiz-khon Ishan of Kokand, d. 1982), later served as one of Ibrahim Hazrat's teachers, as it was not uncommon for aspiring Sufi leader to study with more than one teacher.

Muhammadjan Hindustani (who died in 1989), also achieved a high level of learning as a Sufi, as did Ziyauddin Khan Ishan Babakhan. But neither of these men was responsible for teaching any of the current generation of Sufi revivalist figures. For them, Sufism was part of the tradition of Hanafi Islam and needed to be studied as such. Therefore, Hindustani felt obliged to study Rumi, Bedil, and Mashrab, and he believed that his close association with Sufi figures like Ishan Abdurrahmanjon and Ishan Sheikh Asadullah was part of his personal religious education and how he insured his own lifelong education.

**Soviet-era sheikhs of Jahriya.** The sheikhs of Jahriya practiced loud *ziker* (*jahr*). They traditionally believe the lines of their spiritual succession come from Yasawiya or Qadiriyya. Haji Ismail Pirmuhammad-zadeh, the imam of the mosque of the Ghissar region in Tajikistan, is an exception as he is a representative of Naqshbandiya who practices loud *ziker*.

Probably the best known of the sheikhs of Jahriya was Ghulam-ata Narmat, born in 1916, who still lives in his native town of Ku-yi Girvan, near Namangan. Ghulam-ata is a devotee of the Yasawiya.<sup>15</sup>

Ghulam-ata learned Arabic grammar, how to read the Quran, and the basics of *ziker* from his father, Narmat-ata (Nar-Muhammad-ata), who made a living by making special braided flat baskets (*savat*). As was true of most who sought to follow the Sufi way during the Soviet times, Ghulam-ata did not have a teacher. He acquired his mystical experiences by participating in *ziker* rituals, conversing with experienced sheikhs, and reading Sufi literature. Ghulam-ata believes that such methods of joining *tariqat* (through participation in *ziker* rituals) was acceptable because of the central role of the public performance of *ziker* in Yasawiya teaching.

Ghulam-ata fought during World War II from 1941 to 1943, but was badly wounded and then demobilized. After the war he entered the Namangan group (*halqa*) of the Yasawiya, comprising approximately nine sheikhs, who held unsanctioned gatherings in participants' houses or in remote villages (in particular, in the village of Tuda near Chustom). The number of participants and spectators ranged from 100 to 2,000.

One of the best-known leaders of this group was Muhammad Siddik Pashsha, who died in 1988. After his death, the group was effectively dissolved because Ghulam-ata was the last surviving sheikh of this group. After Muhammad Siddik Pashsha's death, Ghulam-ata began to take part in meetings of other Yasawiya groups because the Yasawiya do not subscribe to the same rigid hierarchical practices of the Naqshbandiya. Yasawiya are united only by a collective ritual practice.

Dowud-khon of Namangan, now in his late seventies, is another Jahriya sheikh. A lengthy sketch of his activities during the early 1990s appears in the first paper of this series.

Another well-known figure from this category of sheikhs is Abd al-Wahhab zadeh Qahhari Ismail from the Vahdat region near Dushanbe. At present, he is the imam of the mosque in Vahdat. He belongs to Qadiriyya brotherhood, and he studied with the grandfather of Khoja Akbar Turajon-zade (the former Tajik Islamic revolutionary leader who later served as deputy premier of Tajikistan).

### **An Enigmatic “Naqshbandi”**

One Soviet-era figure, Muhtarjon Abdullaev, may be partially reinventing himself as circumstances in Central Asia have changed. There is much contradictory information about this person. In an informal dialogue with me in early 1992, Muhtarjon Abdullaev mentioned that he had trained several hundred followers in the Sufi way during his years in charge of the Mir-i Arab madrassa in Bukhara, a post he held during the last decade or so of Soviet rule.<sup>16</sup> He told me about this when I chanced to meet him at a small mosque beside the burial site of Baha ad-Din Naqshband. His training, he stated, was conducted outside the confines and curriculum of the madrassa.

Muhtarjon's father, Abdullah qori (no relation to Abdullah qori from Tashkent), was from a well-known line of Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya, but it was generally understood that he did not train a generation of his own followers. According to Bakhtiyar Babajanov, one of Uzbekistan's most prominent experts on Sufi thought, Muhtarjon did not receive formal training as a Sufi although it is possible that his father did provide him with some instruction. Babajanov notes that during his several lengthy sessions with Muhtarjon—who was appointed to succeed Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf as mufti for Uzbekistan—Muhtarjon showed no real familiarity with Sufi literature or knowledge of *zikr*, although he did have knowledge of *rivayat* (transmission of a hadith), the legends of well-known Sufis that are traditionally passed on through oral recitation.

Whether this is true is hard to know, although I did meet one of Muhtarjon's pupils, the head of a small madrassa in Almaty, who at least confirmed that he was a pupil and that he considered himself a Sufi who had received spiritual direction from Muhtarjon. This makes me think that Muhtarjon Abdullaev did run some sort of extracurricular study group, but it is entirely possible that it fell far short of the kind of education that trained Sufi *ishans* normally provided.

### **Further Degradation of Sufism**

Although the authority of Sufi sheikhs among believers in the Soviet Union was relatively high, Sufism went through a much deeper and more profound

degradation during the Soviet period than it did under either colonial rule or during the earlier centuries. During the Soviet era, for fear of the authorities, virtually every sheikh whatever his social status could not create a fully functioning group with a traditional center (*khanaqa*). Sufism, like Islam, was actually adapting to its surroundings.

One feature of Soviet Sufism was the elitism of its leaders. Their limited writings show, however, that the level of Sufi knowledge among the sheikhs was limited mostly as it was to the knowledge of rituals and some theoretical statutes of classical Sufism. Because the self-defined community of religious believers did not want to stray too far from its religious roots, formal Sufi gatherings (*majlislar*) were conducted rarely and secretly in the homes of members of a Sufi group or at remote provincial shrines and other holy places.

Adherents of Sufism today remember that authorities, most often the police, sometimes tried to stop these clandestine meetings. Thus, the group would gather again at a different place. This illegal or, at best, quasi-legal status did not create the conditions for the revival and full-fledged functioning of Sufi brotherhoods.

Although a number of distinguished Sufi figures continued to write and teach during this period, the education of their disciples was limited in scope and carried out on an individual basis. Most often, either descendants of traditional or religious families or descendants of Sufi sheikhs became disciples. Sufis could not openly demonstrate their Sufi identity.

After the relative withdrawal of Sufi sheikhs from public activities, the cult graves (*mazar*) of Sufi sheikhs became a major source for the preservation of religious consciousness and identification. Such cult graves of leaders like Baha ad-Din of Bukhara, Khoja Ahrar of Samarkand, Mawlana Charkhi of Dushanbe, and Ahmad Yasawi of Turkestan were very popular.

Because only a dozen legal mosques remained open throughout Central Asia during the Soviet era and visiting them meant risking undesirable official attention, it was logical that ordinary believers redirected their religious rituals and their faith toward saints' *mazars*, as they gathered there to seek *barakat* (blessings).

These gatherings took place during all Muslim and traditional holidays, even on Soviet holidays. In fact, with time the Soviet holidays became imbued with religious symbolism. A group of old men gathering at a Sufi shrine on April 22, 1984, the celebration of Lenin's birthday, were asked why they were there. One answered: "Russians have their own *avliya* (sacred objects), while we have our own. Our *avliya* love us, Russian *avliya* love them. They get their own *barakat*, we get our own."<sup>17</sup>

Economic difficulties and living a hard life taught Central Asian Muslims to look for support not only from Allah. They always also prayed for a human protector, someone who possessed *karamat* (or *karama*), meaning that the protector could create a miracle and speak to Allah for the common man. Because Allah himself endowed *karamat*, that person could serve as a mediator between a believer and Allah. All Sufi sheikhs claimed to have *karamat*, although these abilities were

largely exaggerated by their disciples. A possessor of *karamat* was called *vali*, one who is trusted or close to Allah.

It was believed that *avliya* spread grace (*barakat*), a certain aura capable of saving a person from misfortune or bringing success. *Barakat* was given to a saint by Allah, and that person remained a bearer of *barakat* even after death, spreading it from the grave and through the spirit. Belief in *barakat* is the foundation of the cult of saints and their graves. All these concepts, although in a more complicated form, are well developed in classical Sufism. These concepts, however, became vulgarized among ordinary believers and grew into a cult of saints. To ordinary believers, all Sufi sheikhs and their graves are considered sources of *barakat*. This cult of saints is a highly adapted form of Sufism, and it was the main focus of Sufi rituals and practices during the final decades of Soviet rule. Ironically, only the most centrally located *mazars* became popular pilgrimage sites. Many of the holiest places, the graves of many very influential Central Asian religious figures, were largely ignored because they were in hard-to-reach places.

Assertions that Sufi brotherhoods were fully functional in Central Asia, with hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of adherents, as scholar Alexandre Benningsen has written, are very far from the truth. It is true that untold numbers of Central Asians participated in traditional gatherings and rituals at large mausoleums with cemeteries where Sufi leaders were buried, but this should not be taken as evidence that Sufism thrived or was capable of transforming itself into a political movement such as what Naqshbandiya achieved in the centuries preceding Russian rule.<sup>18</sup>

### Revival of Sufism after Independence

The real revival of Sufism in Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan, was prompted by Gorbachev's reforms and the related liberalization of attitudes toward religion. The crisis of Communist ideology had become visible long before, however, at the end of the 1970s. Gorbachev's reforms were the beginning of the revival of people's religious consciousness as part of a search for an alternate ideology.

This religious revival took place throughout the Soviet Union, but it was especially pronounced in the Central Asian republics, where the majority of the population continued to identify themselves as Muslims. The changes in the Soviet Union became a major stimulus for the beginning of re-Islamization.

The revivals of the various Sufi groups started simultaneously. It is difficult to speak of modern Sufism as a high spiritual path because it is difficult to revive the mystical-philosophical tradition that was interrupted long ago, at the level of ideas. It is a difficult and long-term process. Current revivals are often imitations predicated more on the outward associations of Sufism than on the revival of spiritual teachings. This makes the current revival of Sufism unpredictable and potentially relatively easy to politicize with little warning.

Partly this is due to the absence of a single leader who is independent of the state and perceived by the community as being of commanding intellect and religious learning. The emergence of such a figure was all but precluded by the pattern of development of the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya circles, the most hierarchical of Central Asia's Sufi circles, because they were not connected structurally even before Russian colonization.

When state policies toward religion began to change, the whole question of the relationship of Sufism to Islam came under reconsideration as well, not so much by the state as by the Islamic hierarchy. With time, Sufism had evolved to become little more than a cult of saints, and for many ordinary believers Islam and this cult of saints were synonymous.

During Gorbachev's reforms, when it became possible to practice religion more openly, all theologians, conservatives as well as fundamentalists, criticized the cult of saints and tried to bring people back from the *mazars* and into the mosques. The doctrinal reasons for this are discussed at length in the first paper in this series.

During his term as Uzbekistan's state-appointed mufti, Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf tried very hard to regulate the cult of saints. Yet he did not dare to close down the *mazars* because the gifts of money and animals that people brought to the *mazars* became good supplemental income for SADUM (the government's Spiritual Board of Muslims in Central Asia and Kazakhstan), under whose purview all *mazars* and virtually all architecture complexes associated with religion were placed in 1991.

Thus, the statements of theologians of independent Uzbekistan mirrored many of the pronouncements of their Soviet atheist predecessors who had criticized these gatherings at the *mazars*. The Communist Party Central Committee had passed dozens of special resolutions against such "unapproved gatherings of retrograde elements, ignorant believers." And, in this, from 1957 to 1982 the Central Committee often had the support of Central Asia's leading cleric, Ziyauddin Khan Ishan Babakhan, the head of SADUM.

Ziyauddin rejected Sufi influence and legitimacy and issued many fatwas against Sufism and its rituals. He had received training in Saudi Arabia, where he was influenced by Wahhabism and a far less tolerant vein of Islam. Ziyauddin's family, though, was one of the *ishan-i mirathy*, families whose genealogy linked them to the great Sufi families of Central Asia.

While the Soviet officials opposed the veneration of saints by the Central Asians because they identified the practice with Islam and the spread of religion, the Islamic hierarchy opposed saint worship for exactly the opposite reason: they believed it made religious learning and textual study more difficult by effectively degrading it to the seeming equal of folk practices that had no place in formal Islamic law.

This kind of folk Sufism had long been present in Central Asia, making it easy for the community to fall back on when the religious hierarchy was effec-

tively decapitated by Soviet policies. Local belief in the miracles of Sufi saints had come to dominate when the brotherhoods of the Naqshbandiya went into spiritual decline. The complaints of the Central Asian clerics of the late twentieth century echoed the complaints of reformers at the beginning of the twentieth century who saw the “baneful influence of Sufism” as one of the reasons behind the local stagnation of Islam.

Enough of a hierarchical infrastructure remained in Central Asia to create the grounds for a rebirth of a more traditional style of Sufism, in the open, with Sufi sheikhs attracting supporters and students and even seeking to build their own *khanaqas*. Moreover this revival provides a challenge for the government and religious hierarchy alike. The government is attracted to what many see as the lesser risk of politicization of Sufism, and the religious hierarchy is unhappy with the idea of religious competition.

The Uzbek regime in particular is still grappling with what attitude to take in the long run to the Sufi revival. Kazakh civil leaders seem to view it as harmless, and the Tajiks consider it inevitable.

Initially, at least, Uzbek authorities seem to have found Sufism—or at least Turkey’s interest in the revival of the Naqshbandiya holy places—as potentially attractive. The Naqshbandiya are an even more important Sufi group in Turkey than the Yasawiya. This is probably one of the factors that led Karimov to appoint Muhtarjon Abdullaev as mufti in 1993. Abdullaev undoubtedly served as imam of the mosque in Karimov’s native region in Samarkand from 1989 to 1993 and he had campaigned for Karimov in the presidential elections.

During the early 1990s, Karimov even referred to Sufism as part of the “golden heritage” (*oltin meroth*) of the Uzbeks, a phrase he used in a 1993 address to parliament. Abdullaev, however, quickly fell from official grace. He, like Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf, was accused of taking advantage of his official position for personal gain, in Abdullaev’s case reportedly through the sale of valuable Turkish carpets given as gifts to Uzbek mosques.

Whatever the truth of these allegations, it is likely that Abdullaev realized the potential professional (and possibly material) gains associated with his becoming an internationally recognized Sufi figure. Turkish Naqshbandis provided much of the funding for the rebuilding of the shrine of Baha ad-Din Naqshband, and Turkish philanthropic groups also provided scholarships for Uzbek students and additional funds for the reconstruction of other mosques and madrassas.

President Islam Karimov undoubtedly recognized the advantage to Turkish-Uzbek relations of having in the Uzbek official entourage a mufti who considered himself a Sufi leader while President Turgut Ozal of Turkey, who died in 1993 while in office, was following a policy of aggressively supporting Central Asian independence. Not long after Ozal’s death, Karimov began to rethink playing the “Islamic card” as part of his foreign policy strategy.

The Uzbek state has yet to intervene to try to stop the Sufi revival. Those in the government who are responsible for religious policy know about the

existence of Sufi groups, but so far the officials do not perceive them as a national security threat. There are rumors that both the Uzbek and Kazakh state security organs have held “preventive conversations” with Ibrahim Hazrat and Ismatullah Sheikh, respectively. Prominent foreign Sufi leaders are finding it increasingly difficult to get visas to travel to Uzbekistan—a change in policy for the Uzbek regime. The collapse of the Soviet Union reunited the Muslims of this region with their brethren from other countries. Not only were most Central Asians free to travel to Islam’s holy cities, but now foreign pilgrims could freely travel to Central Asia’s religious sites and reach out to their coreligionists.

Turks have been particularly drawn to the region, especially because of the popularity of the Naqshbandiya movement in Turkey. During the mid-1990s, Naqshbandiya emissaries from Turkey visited Uzbekistan; they included the followers of Abd al-Baki Husayni, Sheikh Ahmad Afandi, and Mahmud Usta Osmanoglu. But government restrictions put in place by the Kazakh and Uzbek security services, in particular, have ensured that the three have developed very limited followings in both these countries.

Pakistan’s Sheikh Ahmad Zulfikar Naqshbandi Mujaddidi of Lahore has had more success. He visited Tajikistan for the first time in 1989, and many sheikhs from Uzbekistan came to see him. On one of his later trips, he went to the Uzbek part of Surkhandarya and stayed at the home of Ahmadjon Makhdum. Ahmadjon has recalled this visit in his writings, noting that in 1996 he met with Ahmad Zulfikar in Mecca during the hajj and two years later Ahmad Zulfikar came to Uzbekistan. During his visit, the Pakistani sheikh spent most of his time in Bukhara and visited the graves of all the early Naqshbandiya. He also initiated a few individuals into the brotherhood. The best known of them is Salim Bukhari, who has a civil education and a degree in German and who currently chairs the Baha ad-Din Naqshband Foundation on Sufism and Sufi Culture in Bukhara. Ahmad Zulfikar also had disciples among clerics working in the Uzbek Islamic administration,<sup>19</sup> and some followers in Dushanbe, for example, Pir Muhammad-zadah Mahsumi Ismail in Ghissarski. Over time, however, Ahmad Zulfikar’s success began to concern the Uzbek authorities, and for the past three or four years, he has not been granted visas by Uzbek authorities.

No restrictions have been put on the publication of Sufi literature thus far, neither the literature of classical Sufism that belongs to Hanafi learning more generally nor to Soviet-era literature, much of which is becoming legally available for the first time. The new Sufi leaders are pressing hard for publication of this material because they are eager to set themselves up as coequal with Central Asia’s formal religious establishment. Descendants of Sufi leaders are also eager to see their parents’ and relatives’ works in print.

For the first time it is now possible to begin studying the real nature of Sufism under Soviet rule, which is critical to understanding the potential of the current

revival to remain politicized and focused on spiritual rebirth. Intellectuals like Ishan Abdurrahmanjon, Faqiri, and Ravnaqi wrote traditional Sufi compositions generally dedicated to theoretical issues of Sufism. An essay by Sheikh Zuhridin qori of Shakhrikhan near Andijan on Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya rituals was published recently, and Faqiri's essay on the Bukhara revolution of 1922 is now being published, although such publications are rare.

New material is now coming out about Sufism during the Soviet period. Ahmadjon Makhdum Mujaddidi's biography, published shortly before his death in 2002, shed light on the furtive methods of religious education within the Soviets' atheist society. Orally transmitted material about the practice of Sufism during the Soviet period is also now being written up. Many Soviet sheikhs entrusted their secrets to their closest disciples so that later the disciples could record their teachers' memoirs. Ibrahim Hazrat is said to be preparing a book of reminiscences about his Soviet-era teachers.

A somewhat less formal and less traditional written legacy is also developing. Contemporary sheikhs are leaving behind short biographies of their lives—they may or may not have written the biographies themselves—as well as compilations of ritual practices and histories of their brotherhoods.

Many sheikhs of the second generation in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan publish their own, more populist articles in newspapers and magazines. These writings can teach us much about the rhetoric of Sufi ethics. Followers of Ismatullah Sheikh sometimes appear on Kazakhstan's private television network channels in Almaty, Karaganda, Jezkazgan, Zhambyl, and Kentau, and those channels televise Sufi lectures, songs, and rituals. A comparable outreach via television or radio does not seem to exist in Uzbekistan.

We have no evidence that suggests the sheikhs have any officially recognized funds such as the *vaqf* of Pakistan's Naqshbandiya, and, so far, not one government in the region has spoken of changing that policy. At the same time, however, the Central Asian governments' attitudes toward the revival of Sufi groups are more benign than their attitudes toward most other forms of Islamic revival. In Uzbekistan, in particular, the state's attitude is more benign to Sufis than is the attitude of Uzbekistan's Islamic establishment, which often comes from the same social class as the Sufis and is trying to gain influence among the same groups in society.

Non-Sufi Islamic leaders in the region tend to have a relationship with their Sufi counterparts that is at best neutral and at worst quite negative. For example, the Uzbek mufti, Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf, is critical of most contemporary Sufis of the region, believing them to be uneducated charlatans. He views Sufism and the Sufi leaders of the past quite positively, however, and to him they are part of the doctrinal heritage of Central Asian Islam. His credibility on the matter is weak, however, because his book on the subject suggests that his knowledge of Sufism is superficial and often incorrect.<sup>20</sup>

In pre-Soviet times most of these sheikhs came from traditional Sufi family

clans (*ishan* or *khoja*) or from religious families. This is also true today. Even their disciples, *murids*, were almost never recruited among ordinary believers for fear that the civil authorities would be threatened by such actions. This is less true today, but revivalist Sufis are eager to demonstrate their links to traditional Sufi leaders and to attract to themselves wealthy followers who could help support their movements. In fact, today's revivalist Sufis show no fear as they try to attract a broad membership.

The revival of Sufism is thus potentially financially lucrative for those who engage in it, which further angers the Uzbek clerical establishment—particularly in the localities—as it creates a threat to their traditional sources of income. Some of the new Sufi leaders are accumulating considerable resources and are able to rival the clerics of SADUM, if not exceed them, in the number and devotion of their followers. Ibrahim Hazrat in particular is acquiring many enemies among the local Hanafi imams.

## Sufism in Central Asia Today

Sufism is becoming a spiritual alternative for some believers, partly because the new ideology of independent nationhood being promoted by state propaganda organizations is receiving a lukewarm reception. Sufism can now be spread legally, which makes it more attractive to the older and middle-aged Central Asian believers who are put off by the illegality of Hizb ut-Tahrir and that it is at variance with traditional Islamic teachings.<sup>21</sup>

Sufi groups have spread quickly in numbers and in their geographic reach. Members are recruited to Naqshbandiya groups from all walks of life, regardless of ethnic or religious identity. Although Sufism is mostly a phenomenon among Muslims, Ibrahim Hazrat has some followers in Russia among Russians, Tatars, and Moldovans. Qadiriyya and Yasawiya do not accept non-Muslims. The Naqshbandiya will accept non-Muslims into the order if they first convert to Islam.

Usually, all sheikhs tell their followers to bring to the brotherhood their wives, sisters, brothers, and other relatives. Many also bring their friends. In this way, recruitment takes place via a family tree. For example, almost all taxi drivers on the route between Kokand and Tashkent are *murids* of Ibrahim Hazrat because they were brought in by one of the elderly drivers. They too, of course, are looking for patronage and *barakat* of the sheikh. Ibrahim Hazrat took them in, always talked about their problems, and offered advice with emotion and compassion. He sprinkled in talk of Sufism and the “invisible support” of elders (*pirlar*) with discussions of everyday life, everyday problems. Ibrahim has said that if a person does well in everyday life, it is because he is supported by the spirits of the Naqshbandiya sheikhs and that he (Ibrahim) requests these spirits to aid in the well-being of his *murids*.

Barriers to entry are not formidable for those wishing to become ordinary members of the brotherhood. In more elitist groups, the sheikh selects members only after a rigorous exam (mostly on aspects of the Sharia) and character assessment. Groups led by Naqshbandiya sheikhs—Ahmadjon Makhdum in Shakhrikhan or Odil-khon qori in Andijan—require formal instruction and are more thorough and are not based on individual choice, as in other groups. In such groups ordinary people like taxi drivers are not accepted. Such exclusivity reduces the number of such Sufi groups, makes membership more prestigious, and creates (at least in the minds of their leaders) a higher pedestal upon which to place the sheikh.

Estimates vary, but Ibrahim Hazrat is said to have between twenty thousand and thirty thousand *murids* in Uzbekistan (in the Ferghana Valley, Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand), in the south of Kazakhstan, and in Kyrgyzstan. In all, there are about fifty thousand Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya *murids* in the region.

There has yet to appear among the post-Soviet Sufi leaders a sheikh who knows well all the fine points of the path of spiritual perfection (*tariqat*) and the history of his brotherhood. The popular concept of Sufi heritage is limited to semilegendary stories about prominent Sufi figures of the past.

The ritual practice consists of simplified practices of the late medieval brotherhoods, complete with the vulgarization of traditional rites. In some cases, we can even speak of the complete dilettantism of some sheikhs (especially of Jahriya groups) who have many followers but who are capable of conveying only the simple technicalities of the ritual, namely *zikr*, the “remembrance of the name of God.” This does not appear to be a case of trying to adapt to the low level of knowledge among neophytes but of the sheikhs’ own limited knowledge.

The basis of the Naqshbandiya rituals is “quiet *zikr*,” the names of God said silently, without uttering a sound and with deep spiritual concentration. In Jahriya—itself a byproduct of Yasawiya and Qadiriyya—*jahr* is carried out loudly, accompanied by body movements, and sometimes by mandatory, collective ritual dances (*raqs*).

Although other aspects of the faith may have been forgotten, ancient ritual tradition has not been. The practices of the Kazakh *murids* of Ismatullah Sheikh, which are not concealed from the outside world, have shown the survival of these rituals. The sheikh gradually, without pressure, but quite persistently demands fulfillment of the basic instructions of the Sharia (*farz*).<sup>22</sup> This ritual draws on the historical parallel of Ahmad Yasawi and his followers participating in the broad public Islamicization among people to the north of Mawara an-nahr and the Islamicization of the Mongol leaders and tribes.

The majority of the sheikhs have their own meeting houses called *khanaga*. Some are imams of mosques, and those mosques have become known as Sufi mosques that play host to the rituals of the imam’s brotherhood.

Sufism's revival is currently more of a national phenomenon than a broad regional trend, although some groups—for example, Ibrahim Hazrat's—may have a regional following in both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It seems likely, though, that Sufism in Central Asia will remain a national phenomenon because of the absence of ties between separate Sufi groups or even between separate branches of the same brotherhood. The natural competition among brotherhoods and subgroups also plays a role, as does the protection provided by the state in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the government's favored Sufi groups. The incipient regional reach of a few of the current Sufi figures is good reason to assume that if a single charismatic and authoritative leader were to emerge, a large cross-national Sufi movement could develop.

### Current Generation of Sufi Leaders

Several Sufi leaders are growing in prominence in Central Asia. They include Ibrahim Hazrat and Ismatullah Sheikh as well as other Uzbek and Tajik sheikhs.

**Ibrahim Hazrat.** Ibrahim Hazrat is currently Uzbekistan's best known Sufi leader. He was born in 1928 in the village of Buwaydah, west of Kokand. He is a charismatic figure, although not exceptionally so, in part because of his personal modesty. Those who have met him and heard him preach are struck by his penetrating look and his long, white beard. He speaks softly, but clearly, and he knows how to attract listeners.

Ibrahim Hazrat has approximately twenty thousand *murids* living within easy traveling distance, and ten thousand people gather at his *khanaqa* in Buwaydah for a typical Friday service. More come on holidays.

People say they are attracted to Ibrahim Hazrat because in his sermons and writings he addresses the issues that are close to their lives, such as market prices and prospects for the harvest. He also gives concrete advice on investments and how to get through difficult personal times. He is also well regarded because of his acts of personal charity. He regularly helps poor families and sends money and food to an orphanage in Kokand.

Although Ibrahim Hazrat reads much published Sufi literature and knows the ritual practice well, his knowledge of historical writings of the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya movement is relatively limited. Ibrahim Hazrat's influence is growing rapidly. Ordinary Uzbeks find his writings more accessible than the writings of a more erudite theological figure like Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf. Ibrahim Hazrat's followers include commoners, ordinary bureaucrats, teachers, members of the artistic community and intelligentsia, entrepreneurs, and junior police officers. To date he has firmly rejected any political goals. He often repeats this phrase: "A *padishah's* [king's] responsibility is the welfare of the country. Our [Sufi] responsibility is the path to God. We summon people to Allah."

When asked about his attitude toward Islamic terrorist organizations, Ibrahim Hazrat responded that they are at a dead end and that “Allah has left their hearts and Satan took up residence there.” This is traditional rhetoric, but it is an honest reflection of the current apolitical nature of his movement.

The activities of Ibrahim Hazrat and his followers are generally oriented toward increasing their membership base, teaching collective Sufi rituals to new members, organizing assistance to those in need, and disseminating moral instructions. In traditional fashion, Ibrahim Hazrat has been able to attract highly placed local officials among his *murids* or, at the very least, among his admirers (*muhlis*). For example, in Andijan two out of the four deputies of the regional mayor are rumored to be *muhlis* of Ibrahim Hazrat.

Ibrahim Hazrat regularly receives voluntary donations from his disciples and regular admirers (*ihlosmandlar*). For example, during the past five years he has been given seven automobiles by a group of businessmen in gratitude for Ibrahim Hazrat’s blessing (*barakat*) for financial transactions successfully accomplished. Ibrahim Hazrat, according to tradition, gives the blessing, perhaps offers some advice, and reads a prayer (*dua*) for luck. When the transaction is successful, the businessperson must give the sheikh his due share. No donation is too small. Dozens of items are given: different types of traditional small offerings such as cattle and chickens or money, clothes, and food. Peasant-farmers who consider themselves *murids* of the sheikh bring the sheikh his part of their harvest, the sheikh’s *nazr*.

There are no regular, large gatherings of all disciples of a brotherhood, which would be a physical impossibility given that a sheikh’s students are scattered over a vast territory. The only large-scale gatherings take place on Muslim holidays. The Sufi brotherhoods, however, are replicating their historical antecedents and are establishing a clear hierarchical structure. At the head of a large group is a sheikh. He has a deputy or deputies (*khalifalar*) who are the heads of local groups within cities or large settlements where followers range in number from fifty to one thousand. The disciple of Ibrahim Hazrat in Margilan is responsible for approximately one thousand believers. Some *khalifalar* have their own deputies and assistants. *Murids* go on with their own lives and get together locally when possible.

In Ibrahim Hazrat’s closest circle are already signs of competition from those who hope to succeed him as head of the order after his death. It is impossible to know who will become the leader of the next generation of Sufi followers. Many current leaders are influential, but none is remarkably more influential than the others. Among several possible candidates, competition verging on hostility exists between Ibrahim Hazrat’s would-be successor, Abdullah Kokandi, and Saifullah, the head of the Margilan groups. Some aspirants among the *khalifalar*, aware of their poor odds for success, have left for other cities in Central Asia. For example, Qurban-Ali Sheikh discussed below moved from Tashkent to Zhambyl, in Kazakhstan, where he started his own order.

**Ismatullah Sheikh.** Kazakhstan’s most important sheikh is Ismatullah Sheikh, and he is one of Central Asia’s most important spiritual leaders. He is the head of the Jahriya Sufi groups of Kazakhstan. Ismatullah Sheikh, or Taqdir, as his disciples call him, derives his spiritual heritage from a combination of two branches—Yasawiya and Qadiriyya. Although the Sufis under his leadership have yet to play an openly political role in Kazakhstan, his biography suggests a potential to be an effective leader of a politicized Islamic movement.

He is a descendent of the Kazakh diaspora in Afghanistan. He grew up in a family that fled Central Asia as religious and political refugees during the time of the Russian Revolution. At one point he belonged to the mujahideen militias that fought against the Soviet invasion, and he was wounded in battle. Until recently, Ismatullah Sheikh lived in Pakistan, where he was exposed to many different Islamic trends. Currently he is a resident of Almaty and has many followers in the cities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The composition of his group is diverse; young adults comprise almost 80 percent of his followers, most of whom are small-business owners or members of the educated elite. Some have doctoral degrees. He also has reached out to try to get prominent political figures—or at least members of their staffs—involved in his movement. The former mayor of the city of Turkestan publicly stated that he is an admirer of Ismatullah Sheikh. These should be taken as isolated cases, however, because civil authorities are not yet joining the Sufi movement in great numbers.

When he comments on politics in Kazakhstan, Ismatullah Sheikh tends to be cautious and largely loyal to President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s regime, so one cannot now speak of any political ambitions or opposition activity. His *murids* recount that approximately four years ago Nazarbayev’s government was wary of the sheikh’s quickly rising authority and deliberately delayed the process of granting him Kazakh residency. The civil authorities even spoke of revoking his right to stay in the country. The sheikh then subsequently remarked positively about Nazarbayev, softened the sharpness of his dissent, and placated the situation.<sup>23</sup>

He made similarly positive remarks about President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, praising him, his students report, for having been able to “suppress the rise of Wahhabism” in Uzbekistan.

Ismatullah Sheikh has also been a very effective fund-raiser, as described by one who has sat through meetings at which Ismatullah Sheikh presided:

During a meeting he pays special attention to those whose “wallets are stuffed,” and at the end of the meeting in the *khanaqa* he passes a bag among the listeners, and each donates to the extent he can. Ismatullah asks his listeners not to be tightfisted “on Allah’s way.”

Gifts are called *nazr-sadaqa*. Ismatullah Sheikh also often uses the offerings of his wealthy *murids* and admirers to help poor families (most of whom are part of the brotherhood). He appears to be conscious of the fact that his

authority derives not from religion but, much as a politician's authority, from his standing in society.

The structure of Ismatullah Sheikh's brotherhood is pyramidal; in other words, the leaders of different regions and cities are directly controlled by Ismatullah Sheikh himself. Among his closest disciples is a hidden struggle for the right to be recognized as the sheikh's main successor (*khalifa*). Although Ismatullah Sheikh has already named a successor—Azatulla—at least three other candidates are eager for the post. His movement is as well organized as most Naqshbandiya movements.

**Sheikh Zuhridin qori Naqshbandi Shakhrikhani.** Sheikh Zuhridin qori Naqshbandi Shakhrikhani is another influential Naqshbandiya figure in Uzbekistan. His father and grandfather were also Naqshbandiya Sufis. Zuhridin qori was born on January 14, 1927, in the city of Shakhrikhan (not far from Andijan), and in 1950 he became the only disciple of Khoja Nazar Dehqonboev. He then studied under the Tajik Sufis, Mawlavi Kuhistani and Muhammad-Sharif Hisariy.

He is a member of the National Academy for Sufism and the Sufi Culture (Tasawwuf va Sufiylik Madaniyati), established in 1995 in Bukhara, and in 2000 he was awarded the medal of "Shukhrat" (glory) by President Karimov.

Sheikh Zuhridin-qori has written about the details of Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya rituals. He knows well the theory and practice, but, unlike Ibrahim Hazrat, he tries to limit the number of his followers to fewer than ten, although he never rejects gifts and offerings of money, clothes, and food from his admirers.

**Other Sufi sheikhs in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.** The organizations of Tajikistan's leading Sufis are generally not as hierarchical as Uzbekistan's Naqshbandiya. Abd al-Wahhab zadah Qahhari Ismail is a leader of the Qadiriyya movement and the imam of the mosque in the region of Vakhdat, south of Dushanbe. He studied with the grandfather of Turajon-zade, former deputy prime minister of Tajikistan, but he is rumored to have a better knowledge of ritual than of the written traditions and history of the Qadiriyya brotherhood. Abd al-Wahhab zadah Qahhari Ismail is believed by many to have a conformist mind-set. He was against the war in Tajikistan and especially against participation in the war by people of religion. This, among other reasons, is probably why he has few followers.

Qurban-Ali Sheikh, who recently started his own order in Kazakhstan, has many followers in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Among them are simple civil servants, businesspeople, and even, he asserts, several on the local police force. Relying on his increased authority among believers, he more than once has made statements critical of local authorities and corruption during interviews with correspondents. Qurban-Ali Sheikh has also publicly proposed the

formation of a political party, Naqshbandiya, which, in his plan, could resist religious extremism and terrorism. His knowledge of Naqshbandiya history is poor, however, which may be why he advocates the creation of a Naqshbandiya political party.

Hajji Ismail Pir Muhammad-zadah is a major Naqshbandiya leader in Tajikistan. He is the imam of the mosque in the Ghissar region of Tajikistan and is a master of the technique of the *zikr*. He too was opposed to the war in Tajikistan, and actively spoke out against the involvement of spiritual leaders in that war. This, though, does not seem to have affected his popularity, as he is said to have many *murids*.

Unlike in Uzbekistan in the early 1990s, many of Tajikistan's leading Sufis have been reluctant to involve themselves in political activity, and some even sharply condemned military conflict in their country.<sup>24</sup> The one possible exception is Khoja Akbar Turajon-zade, and it is instructive. He is descended from an ancient Sufi clan whose representatives have left Sufi practice. During Soviet times the family had few students.

Turajon-zade is a complex figure, and he has not sought to advance himself as a Sufi leader although he did seek authority as a religious leader who came from a "noble family of *ishans*." Olivier Roy considers Turajon-zade's activities as part and parcel of his Sufi heritage,<sup>25</sup> but Bakhtiyar Babajanov does not. Babajanov believes that there is no foundation for considering Turajon-zade's actions and claims to be a form of political Sufism. Babajanov's argument that Turajon-zade has not declared himself to be a leader of a Sufi brotherhood or group although he has a Sufi background (which of course he has), is convincing.

Two Uzbek Sufi sheikhs of the transitional period—the late 1980s and early 1990s—are worthy of note because they point up the way in which Sufi leaders can become politicized when the general Islamic environment is politicized, as in Uzbekistan. Both sheikhs were active in the same city, Namangan, and were friendly competitors.

Dowud-khon qori Ortikov was one of the key Muslim leaders of Namangan during the late 1980s and early 1990s when secular rule in Namangan was briefly at risk. A detailed discussion of this period is found in the first paper in this series. He was born in Namangan in 1931, and his father, Ortiq-khon, was shot in 1937. Young Dowud was brought up by his grandfather Eshon-khon tura, a practicing Sufi sheikh who taught his grandson Sufi ritualistic practices (*zikr*, *sama*, and loud *zikr*). The spiritual succession of Eshon-khon tura went back to the sheikhs of Qadiriyya brotherhood, although he was trained by Affaq-khoja, a Naqshbandiya sheikh whose educational lineage traced to the rulers of Kashgar.

The degree of politicization of Dowud-khon qori Ortikov was no less than that of the Wahhabi or Salafi figures of that period. The same was also true of Odil-khon Andijani, another major Sufi figure of the late 1980s and early 1990s, also of Namangan. He too was a figure of great respect during that period, and he also linked his spiritual succession (*silsilah*) to Khoja Ubaydallah Ahrar. He

studied briefly with Hindustani, contemporaneously with from Rahmatullah-alloma and Abduvali qori, and then with Hakimjon qori. Although Odil-khon sought to preserve good relations with these Salafi leaders, they were far more critical of him because of their conviction that Sufism was illegitimate to Islam. Yet, as described in the first paper in this series, Odil-khon worked with them to gather young men to fight in Tajikistan.

Both Dowud-khon and Odil-khon are still alive and active, but both have been affected by the fear of arrest and incarceration. Dowud-khon was brought in numerous times for questioning and in one instance held for a few months. Dowud-khon is now in his late seventies. Odil-khon also has stepped back from overt political activities in response to the rigid policy of Uzbek authorities on political Islam. He remains imam of one of the mosques in Andijan. He remains in opposition to the religious policy of official authorities because he believes that if Muslims in a country form the majority, they have a right to create their political associations or parties. He also believes they should have the right to be represented in the power structures.

Odil-khon and his students avoid associating with Ibrahim Hazrat and his followers, as they consider them false Sufis. Theirs is a natural competition, most likely evidence of the weakness of Odil-khon who, with poorly hidden envy, speaks of the “primitive” methods Ibrahim Hazrat uses to attract *murids*. Odil-khon subjects would-be students to a unique examination on the basis of Sharia; only after the aspirant passes this examination is he taken on as a student.<sup>26</sup>

### **Will the Sufi Revival Become Politicized?**

The current Sufi revival, which some have dubbed neo-Sufism, has become not only a way of life for its members but also an ideology based on faith, which creates a potential for politicization. This is especially true because supporters of a figure like Ibrahim Hazrat come to him for spiritual mediation of problems that originate in their social or material realms.

Sufism has a strong potential in all the countries of the region, but, so far, the growth of the brotherhoods has been in quantity, not quality, at least as judged by the caliber of published works and from my conversations with informants who have interviewed these sheikhs. The faster the spiritual potential is restored, the greater the chances that the intelligentsia will join Sufism. This, in turn, will increase the intellectual potential of Sufism.

The social appeal of Sufism is growing, especially in such brotherhoods as those of Ibrahim Hazrat. The followers of the Sufi sheikhs in the region comprise mostly common people who lack higher education and are estranged from the world of ideas. The sheikhs themselves, in the majority of the cases, are close to the believers and more cognizant of their spiritual needs than other more rigorous imams or other religious leaders of various types.

Most Sufi leaders, as has been true historically, are better adapted to existing realities than are the ulema of establishment mosques. Sufi leaders address the

spiritual world of ordinary individuals. For the neophytes, the congregational beginning is also a key in the new fraternal search for God. In other words, the association of spiritual brothers, under the leadership of a charismatic sheikh, helps the individual to feel the unity of the goal and the impulse of the brotherhood, thus helping to fully identify as a distinct individual.

The politicization of Sufi groups is certainly possible, as is the potential for segmentation and separation between established and new generations of Sufis. We already have a precedent for this in the relationship between Ibrahim Hazrat and Qurban-Ali Sheikh. Qurban-Ali has almost completely separated himself from Ibrahim, rarely visits Ibrahim, and has his own students. Most important, in contrast with his teacher, Qurban-Ali Sheikh already shows a tendency toward political activity.

The direction that Sufism will select for itself will depend on the behavior of the second and maybe third generations of Sufi leaders and the choices made by its membership. Should secular intelligentsia become more attracted to Sufism and seek membership in the Sufi brotherhoods in Uzbekistan, the whole shape of the movement would change quickly. They would likely rise quickly into the elite circles of the brotherhood, with the prospect of taking over leadership. This could lead to the politicization of such groups because the political ambitions of the intelligentsia remain unfulfilled in the absence of civil freedoms. Sufi movements played this role earlier in the Timurid and post-Timurid period.

In almost every state in Central Asia, the Sufi spiritual heritage has become a component of the quickly created post-Soviet national ideologies. These new states, however, have not found a way to meaningfully integrate the legacy of Sufism into any sort of coherent national idea; instead, the states have inadvertently legitimized the position of Sufi groups.

A strong precedent for political activity already exists. The revival of Sufism began along two opposite paths: as active political movements and, simultaneously, as the deliberate disavowal of involvement in politics. The group advocating political activity was represented by Dowud-khon qori Ortikov in Namangan and Odil-khon Andijani in Andijan; disavowal of politics is a tenet of Ibrahim Hazrat and his followers.

Dowud-khon and Odil-khon dominated in the early 1990s, but Ibrahim Hazrat is more dominant today. Both Ibrahim Hazrat and Sheikh Odil-khon Andijani had at least one of the same teachers, Ishan Abdurrahmanjon, and both compete for *murids*. As a result, each of these two men is highly critical of the other.

Sufi leaders offer only a few examples of direct political involvement. Most Sufi leaders instead inject a modicum of tolerance into the region's religious overlay, and they counterbalance the growth of fundamentalism of Islam in the Central Asian countries. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, the Sufi brotherhoods of Central Asia could become more politicized. No state in the region has yet to define its relationship with Sufi groups, although all of the

governments in the region recognize that Sufi leaders are significant drivers of re-Islamicization of the population, which always has potential political ramifications for the ruling class.

Sufism is not inherently a political movement. It is a religious organization, but one whose history shows is relevant politically. Sufism is characterized by its adherents' orthodoxy yet by their drive for reform, which is carried out through the hierarchical organizational structures of their creation. Sufis have leaders who struggle for advancement within the brotherhoods.

This is a structure well-suited to political engagement. History shows that even in relatively placid political times, the majority of the brotherhoods become involved in politics to some degree. Naqshbandiya and Qadiriyya have been politicized brotherhoods in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Turkey, and Kashgar since the fifteenth century. The biographies of their medieval leaders can provide role models for today's leaders, for they went into politics in order to make Sharia the sole law in the life of the state.

Still active in Central Asia is the generation of Sufi leaders who remember the horrors of atheistic politics and prefer to emphasize traditional Sufi rituals. Once the members of the younger generation of Sufis are freer to roam through a broader expanse of history, how will they relate to politics?

The answer will depend on both secular and religious circumstances: the relationship between religion and the state and the basic social and economic needs of the population. Will presidents like Islam Karimov know how to leverage Sufi positions to construct a reasonable balance between Sufis and fundamentalists? This requires a subtlety that has been sorely lacking in Uzbekistan in recent decades.

Yet the growing contradictions between the Sufi leaders and most other religious leaders contain the beginning of a conflict that could spill into the political arena. Sufism is not an absolute barrier to terrorism. Sufi leaders are likely to search for a basis for their political activity in the history of their brotherhood, and as they do they will find conflicting legacies.

Theoretically at least, the radicalization of Hanafi groups could lead to more cooperation with Sufi elements rather than with Salafi groups. Moreover, as the history of the early 1990s showed, all three elements are capable of cooperating, especially if they are pushed in that direction by government policies antithetical to all Islamic communities in the region.

Much of the potential (or lack thereof) for unification will be determined by the nature of the training of the next two generations of Sufi leaders, especially those of Naqshbandiya groups of Uzbekistan, which have the greatest potential for political action. It is likely that subsequent generations of Sufi leaders will be more familiar with the history of their brotherhoods, including the political history of Naqshbandiya.

The reawakening of historical memory in Naqshbandiya can become a significant factor in politicization, at least in stimulating it. Ahmadjon Makhdum

in his book wrote that the distinguishing feature of Naqshbandiya is the fact that they “always cut the roots of tyrants and rulers.”<sup>27</sup>

This could well lead to politicization under the banner of the restoration of the Sharia as state law. This, in turn, could lead to the unification of interests with the representatives of political Islam, for both the Sufis and the conservatives who, for a time, can forget their general hostility to Sufism that largely centers around the often low level of religious learning of Sufi sheikhs and their tolerance of rituals not based on Sharia.

None of this is inevitable. Sufism possibly also could serve as a counterbalance to radical Islam. But efforts by the state (not to mention outside actors) to openly try to use Sufism are likely to cause a backlash, especially if the state tries to encourage a uniform viewpoint among clerics.

A diversity of views and a variety of interests among religious elements are the best ways to support the development of a secular state. Differences of opinion even within the Hanafi community are healthy, as Hanafis too are susceptible to the influence of radical ideas, from within their society and outside.

Right now, the Sufi revival contributes to this diversity and to divisions among Hanafi Muslims. If governments choose to use Sufi ideology as a way to gain support for religious tolerance and for secular ideals, however, it could easily backfire. Central Asian governments should study carefully the different forms of Sufism in Central Asia and their historic roles. Medieval Sufi literature—especially the translations of Naqshbandiya compositions—contains not only moral-ethical standards but also the substantiations of the political activity of Sufi leaders. This material is published openly and is becoming increasingly better known.

Thus far Sufism poses little threat of destabilizing the secular ideology of the state. Much depends on the policy of the state. Currently it is not Sufis but neo-Islamists who have penetrated secular state structures. Sufis are today’s safeguard, but circumstances could turn the younger generation of Sufi leaders into tomorrow’s enemies.

## Notes

1. Often spelled *zikr*, which means, literally, remembrance; this refers to the chanting (either aloud or silently) of the name of God or phrases from the Quran as a means of prayer and meditation.
2. *Sama* is the hearing of music that is not being played, a kind of auditory hallucination (as a devotional practice leading to an emotional state of mind), in Sufism.
3. For a good introduction and bibliography on Sufism, see the several articles on the topic found in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World*, vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
4. This paper often uses the Central Asian style of referring to these people by their first names and spiritual honorifics; English language usage is normally the reverse.
5. A good starting point into this literature is Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); see also J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
6. For an introduction to the life and works of Khoja Ahrar, see Jo-Ann Gross and Asom Urunbaev, eds., *The Letters of Khwaja Ubayd Allah Ahrar and His Associates* (Boston: Brill, 2002).
7. One of the files of the committee for religious affairs in the former Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic contains many years of correspondence in which local authorities warn Tashkent and Moscow that the Khoja Ahrar mosque should not be closed down because closure might lead to disturbances because of its exceptional popularity; see the Central State Archive of Uzbekistan, Fund R-5427, file 17.
8. The following sketch on Dukchi Ishan was adapted from the account written by Bakhtiyar Babajanov, which appeared in Stanislav Prozorov, *Islam na territorii byushei Rossiiskoi imperii. Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 1999), 35.
9. *Pir* is the Persian word for a spiritual master; it is a title given to a Sufi master of a Muslim saint.
10. R. D. McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1996), chap. 3.
11. Recollections of several aged theologians of Bukhara, interview by my Uzbek interlocutor, 1987.
12. For a detailed discussion of Soviet campaigns against Sufis during the first three decades of Soviet rule, see Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), chap. 6.

13. Prozorov, *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii. Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar*, vol. 3. For information on Faqiri, see 107–108; for information on Ravnaqi, see 81–82.
14. Khoja Ahmadjon Makhdum Hanafiy-Naqshabandiy Muhaddidiy, *Risalat ul-komila fi Qada il-fatiya* (Tashkent: Mawaraunnahr, 2005).
15. Prozorov, *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii. Entziklopedicheskiy slovar*, vol. 2, 27.
16. Islam Karimov, president of Uzbekistan, appointed Muhtarjon Abdullaev as mufti in 1993.
17. The word *avliya* is the plural of *vali*, which means one who is trusted or who is close to Allah; it could also mean a person similar to a saint. When the pilgrim at the shrine referred to the Russians' *avliya*, he meant Lenin and other Soviet heroes.
18. Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), chap. 3.
19. Ahmad Zulfikar's disciples included Bahtiyor Nazarov, an adviser on religious affairs at the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.
20. Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf, *Tasawwuf haqida tasawwuyr* [Notions about Sufism].
21. Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Party of Liberation) is a religious-political Islamic group in Central Asia. It rejects Hanafi Islam and promotes jihad and martyrdom as *shahid* (martyrs) through suicide.
22. We were able to record our observations on videotape.
23. Some of his *murids* report that Ismatullah Sheikh has used the manner of the Middle Ages to convey the thought that if his disciples do not disappoint their *padishah*, the *padishah* will not have a reason for oppression.
24. See, for example, the articles by the practicing Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiya sheikhs, Ismail Qahari and Ismail Pir Muhammad-zada, published in Jean-Nicolas Biter, Frederic Geran, A. K. Zayfert, D. Raxmonova-Schwarz, eds., *The Construction of Confidence between Islamists and Secularists—Tajik Experiment* (Dushanbe: Devashch, 2004), 280–298.
25. Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 149–151.
26. Ibrahim Hazrat is less strict with neophytes whose social position does not permit them the luxury of fully mastering the requirements of Sharia before beginning on the mystic way.
27. Ahmadjon Makhdum, *Risalat ul-komila fi Qada il-fatiya*.

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