

Efficacy and Hierarchy: Examples from Afghanistan
For the forthcoming volume: New Games in Central Asia:
Great and Small

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I. The Problem

Apart from the realm of politics -- where public affairs are vitally fraught with shifting and conflicted alliances, competing claims to authority, diverse and cacophonous rhetorics, new governments, and oppositionist movements -- the less politically engaged peoples of Greater Central Asia have maintained a consistency in the ways they have sought efficacy in distress.[1] Coups d'etat, revolutions, civil wars, uprisings, internecine battles, famines, and international invasions have had little affect on the way they cope with the exigencies of human life.

Shrines and coping in Central Asia

Take the frequenting of shrines, for instance. Shrines were being venerated in the Soviet Central Asian states despite Soviet disapproval, some shrines, according to Maria Subtelny, being emblems of national identity. The Kazakhs, for instance, embraced the shrine of Ahmad Yasavi as their "national saint"; the Turkmen cult of holy places was "linked to the cult of tribal ancestors"; in the North Caucasus the shrines of Sufi shaykhs killed fighting Russians invaders were major places of worship. And some sufi leaders were popular owing to their roles "as popular preachers, faith healers, dispensers of amulets and talismans, and as custodians of the so-called holy places." [2] In this volume, Habiba Fathi says that the religious life of non-Islamist women of Central Asia "develops within their homes and around the tombs of saints" because they "provide the ideal conditions for an act of faith expressed in an emotional manner." Pilgrimage and worship at shrines, as well as other practices, have continued among Central Asian women, she says, despite opposition from many sources.

Other recent reports suggest that the veneration of shrines is vitally salient in other sectors of Greater Central Asia. William Dalrymple visited tribal territory in Pakistan in 2005 and reports that near Kohat there is "a small whitewashed shrine that had recently been erected by the side of the road..." It is new. "That is where the army ambushed and killed two al-Qaeda men escaping from Afghanistan," someone explained. "Local people soon began to see the two martyrs in their dreams. Now we believe that they are saints. Already many cures and miracles have been reported. If any of our women want to ask anything special from God, they first come here. ... They say that each shahid [martyr] emitted a perfume like that of roses. For many days a beautiful scent was coming from the place of their martyrdom." In this tribal area, where political affairs are organized quite differently from those in the Soviet successor states, shrine veneration is likewise practiced "as an expression of

emotion.” Here women seeking efficacy in their hardships have imputed sacred power to the tombs of two “martyrs” of the holy war against America. Some of them having seen the men in dreams, they come to the tombs “first” to pray, to seek “cures and miracles,” “to ask anything special from God.”[3] A similar phenomenon has developed in the area of Tora Bora, where many Al Qaeda fighters died in a notorious American offensive. There, near the village of Markhang, twenty-three “martyrs” of the battle are buried and their graves have become “a shrine for Afghans seeking miracle cures.”[4]

It is not merely martyrs of the anti-American struggle whose graves have become shrines for healing. The grave of the famous “Lion of Panshir”, Ahmad Shah Mas’ud, military leader of the Jamiat-I Islami political organization, became, almost immediately after his assassination on September 9, 2001, “a shrine for pilgrims seeking cures from illnesses ranging from epilepsy to madness.”[5]

These reports on the veneration of shrines in the Soviet Union, in the successor states, in tribal Pakistan, and in contemporary Afghanistan closely resemble practices I found in Afghanistan in the 1960s. Here are three examples:

- [An educated woman in Kabul, in English; she was talking about pirs, religious specialists putatively endowed with sacred power but segued into her visit to a shrine.] Women are dependent on pirs and believe in them more than men because they have no one to listen to them. Very few situations are appropriate for women to expose their feelings, their griefs and hardships. Pirs are able to listen to them and provide some relief for their emotional tension. Once during a time of difficulty, I went to the shrine of Shah Shahid to cry. I wept there for some hours until I felt better. Women often do this because there is no other place for them to go, where they can expose their feelings and find some kind of relief. They have no one to talk to and so they have to go outside the household, ...

- [A teacher in Bamian, in Dari, regarding Sunni practices there] Many grooms take precautions against this black magic [a charm to cause impotence], especially if there is a disappointed suitor who could purchase a charm [tacw?z]. Before a wedding the groom and a few friends visit a shrine and walk around it saying a prayer for protection from a black charm. Often the groom obtains a charm that will counteract a black charm. And in the marriage ritual sometimes a prayer [duca], is recited in order to preserve the marriage from black magic.

- [A young man in a tea shop in Bamian, pointing to a man sitting nearby, in Dari] This man is a ‘jinndi’, a person who has a jinn. This is a sickness that comes from being frightened, seeing a jinn at night. You are attacked by a jinn and your mind is choked. The jinn attacks your throat. You may see him in the daytime -- more often at night. They are afraid of the light. A man who is a jinndi says whatever comes to his mind. He needs to go to shrines [to get healed]

These three examples represent different sectors of the

population. The woman who had wept at a shrine came from a well-to-do family and spoke excellent English. The young man who described circumambulating a shrine was moderately well educated and came from a provincial town. The young man who pointed out the “jindi” who needed to be healed by a shrine worked for his father in a teashop and was very likely illiterate. The veneration of shrines, mentioned by all of them, was a taken-for-granted part of their social worlds, just as it still seems to be in the successor states of Central Asia and in Pakistan.

Acually shrines have been venerated for a long time by the peoples of Greater Central Asia – indeed, in the face of criticism and scorn, as Habiba Fathi points out. Since early in the Islamic era the popular tendency to resort to shrines was criticized by the sharia-minded ulama,[6] and in the modern period in Central Asia it has been opposed by various social elements: the leaders of the Jadid movement during the Russian czarist era; by the Soviet state as it promoted secularism for seventy years[7]; by the governments of the successor states now in power; and by the Islamists who now actively make war against those regimes.[8] Yet the practice persists in the successor states of Central Asia and in the tribal zone of Pakistan. Somehow in the informal world of ordinary social life the veneration of shrines has continued to be a vital practice for many ordinary people.

A complex of efficacious practices

But this is not a singular practice. It does not stand in isolation. Other practices are somehow related to shrine veneration, as the statements above indicate.[9] The statement by the educated woman included reference to pirs before she segued into her shrine experience. The young teacher mentioned prayers and the quest “for protection from a black charm.”[10] The tea shop owner’s son described the deleterious influence of jinns. Pirs who have spiritual power, prayers that are efficacious, black magic that causes impotence, jinns that cause sickness, shrines that cure – these are elements of a complex of practices that we can call “a culture of efficacy.” The critical feature of this complex of practices is its orientation toward practical resolution of stressful situations like pain, personal crisis, and the search for relief or protection from misfortune. In the abstract, this complex of cultural practices may include, of course, bio-medical treatments for illness, but for some people in Greater Central Asia biomedical services have been limited, and anyway the misfortunes of life include many other sorts of problems. Even when bio-medical means are available they are never sufficient for all the problems of life. Many of the most pressing causes of distress are not physical but mental and social. This complex of efficacious practices seems to exist alongside bio-medical practice.[11]

A deployable resource

The practices that comprise this complex are culturally constructed in the sense that they are never the only ones possible and are constantly being negotiated and reproduced. And while they

are not a fully articulated set of relations, they are loosely related. The culture of efficacy consists of a cluster of mutually reinforcing categories and conventions, “an aggregate of elements” more or less rationally connected, despite logical breaks, ellipses, even contradictions.[12] My surmise in this work is that among the diverse peoples of Central Asia, where social relations are convoluted and power and influence are circumstantially constituted by local histories,[13] this set of practices has been a cultural resource (one among many), “a repertoire of signs and practices”[14] that are learned and acquired, deployed, invoked, or otherwise enlisted when actions are taken and situations interpreted, according to individual abilities and interests. Indeed, the very performance of such practices reveals people’s concerns, the “realities” that occupy their thoughts, demand their attention.[15]

A habitus of practices

As a cultural set such a culture of efficacy has other entailments. It is linked to displays of authority and the recognition of competence; to conventions of courtesy and etiquette; to the exercise of rights and expressions of significance – that is, to the habitus of everyday life. Among these peoples the “system of structured, structuring dispositions [that] ... is constituted in practice and is always oriented toward practical functions”[16] is, as Bourdieu expressed it, a “a product of history” and at the same time tends to produce similar practices “– more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history [and so] ensures the active presence of past experiences, which ... tend to guarantee ... their constancy over time...”[17]

A doxa of power

Enshrined in such a complex of categories and practices is a cosmic logic, a mythopoetic tradition that recognizes “notions of the obvious, of the taken-for-granted and of incontestable commonsense,” ultimately the “reality” within which people live. [18] The unspecified presumptions by which people carry on their affairs, what Bourdieu calls the “doxa,”[19] provide the “consensual validation which is the basis of collective belief”[20] and operate as if they were the objective truth that structures all social space, “from the practices and perceptions of individuals to the practices and perceptions of the state and social groups.”[21] Assumed without being specified, such presumptions delimit the bounds of reasoning, govern the arguable, and legitimize statuses and forms of leverage [22] so that even challenges to the status quo can merely reinforce its own premises.[23]

Thus, intrinsic to this complex of efficacious practices are culturally defined forces of social domination. The presumptions that organize and develop representations of reality, endow legitimacy to the coercive relations in place, making the extant grounds of authority and influence seem self-evident.[24] Indeed, their force is all the more coercive because they are embedded in the common sense rationale of everyday affairs.[25] Such unstipulated, unarticulated coercive forces are only exposed when critical views

are expressed, threatening conventional practice and the status quo, [26] in which cases the doxic conventionality of ordinary practice may be consciously specified as orthodoxy.[27]

My task

To explain this relationship I offer here a provisional outline of a culture of efficacy, a complex of practices oriented toward coping with the misfortunes of life and the hierarchy of authority and influence entailed in it. My evidentiary material comes from material collected from two years of field work in Afghanistan in the 1960s. The outline is offered as a case in point, a particular instance of the complex of practices extant in one part of Greater Central Asia at a particular time, an outline against which notes on efficacious practice elsewhere may be compared. It is my own construction, an objectification for the benefit of scholarly discussion. As Bourdieu points out, it is outsiders who draw “road maps” like this one. Insiders in contrast acquire their knowledge circumstantially, incrementally, in the course of experience, and so take it for granted, as natural.[28] For outsiders a “road map” that draws attention to places and relationships, even if in stylized form, helps one navigate through unfamiliar territory.

In the interest of brevity, I make extensive use of quotations from my field notes written in 1966-1968. Unless otherwise indicated, all conversations were in Dari, the local dialect of Persian. [29]

II. The Culture of Efficacy as a Categorical Set

In an earlier work on the distresses of people in Bamian in the 1960s I argued that “for the afflicted and poor, religion is not simply a matter of beliefs, customs, and rituals, but it is also essentially one of material efficacy.”[30] Here I describe the culture of efficacy as a repertoire of categories by which misfortunes were identified (“An Ontology of Misfortune”) and by which means of obtaining relief, deliverance, and protection from misfortune were recognized (“An Ontology of Efficacy”).

An ontology of misfortune

Omitting discussion of local categories of physical distress [31] I here consider the invisible forces and spiritual entities that might cause misfortune, as well as the uncertainty that the misfortunes of life create. In this section I specifically refer to the influence of black charms, jinns and other spirits, and the uncertainty about the causes of misfortunes that contributes to a sense that divine forces might bring misfortune.

J?du, J?dugar?.

Behind the material world of the senses there exists a world of forces and spirits, with which humans may relate through religion or magic (sihr).[32] Magic is a material force that affects the world mechanically without the engagement of the mind or feelings of an animated being.[33]

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] If you strike the ground with a stick a bal? will come out. That is a kind of trouble, not a person, but maybe it is like a ghost.

Bal? literally means a calamity and so merely an event or a condition, but Sheikh Gholam Ali was not sure whether it was an animated being. Animated or not, a bal? would appear in response to another condition that triggered it; it was a mechanical relationship.

This appears to be how charms [tacw?z] work. But charms could be used for wrongful purposes, in which case they were sorcery (j?du). A charm to make a person fall in love was used legitimately when it was intended to induce an estranged wife to love her husband or an estranged husband to love his wife, but it was illegitimate -- and therefore sorcery -- for it to be used to seduce a person with whom one had no sexual rights, such as another person's spouse. A charm intended to cause animosity would be sorcery if it was applied to family members, but not sorcery if it was used to break up an affair.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] I have a charm that will make two people fight a husband with another woman with whom he might be having an affair -- any two people, brothers, mother and father, etc. I had a lot of women come to me for [such] charms. They came to me because I was supposed to be clean. They wouldn't complain if the charm didn't work because they came secretly and they didn't want others to know. A jâdugar [sorcerer] is not a good name among them, and if something bad would happen, people would blame them for asking him to write the charm.

A sorcerer [j?dugar], then, was an immoral practitioner of magic.

[34]

- [Teacher in Bamian] People fear mullahs who have the power to make charms, that they might make one against them. They might bury a charm with the name of someone on it at their door, or they might throw it into their house. [They fear] that it might curse or hex the house.

- [Mir Hasan] The Shica fear that Sayyeds might pray against them, as they know about magical charms and sorcery [jâdugari]. Their magical power and holy descent makes them close to God.

- [A Sunni malik in Bamian] In the early days people were afraid that these sayyeds might pray against them and hurt them in some way they might die, or the animals would die or become sick, or the crops would not be good. This was the biggest reason people were afraid of the sayyeds.

One of the most widely feared j?dus was a charm to cause impotence, especially in a marriage that was contested by a disappointed suitor.

- [A Hazara man in Bamian] In all Islamic areas and in Hindustan [India] people believe that in the Qur'an or in other religious books, there are prayers [incantations] which some mullahs or some Sayyeds know. If this is recited to the groom [at the time of his marriage] it can be a charm on him. It can make him impotent. It used to be that there were a lot of people who could not have sex relations, but now only a few.

As mentioned earlier, it was as a precaution against a jadu that grooms circumambulated shrines, and that a prayer was recited in the marriage ritual to preserve the marriage from a j?du.

Nazar [the eye].

The "evil eye", nazar, was also believed to cause misfortune.

[35]

- [A Hazara man] "When someone looks at something and likes it -- maybe he wants it -- then that is nazar, [the look]," said a Hazara man. "It brings bad luck. I owned a lot of animals, several cows and donkeys, and one day, a stranger came and stood out in the field and watched for a long time. After that, several of my animals died. You don't have to want to bring bad luck to cast the look on someone; it just happens. If we think someone might come along and look at our cow -- maybe to admire them -- we might drive our cows over the hill the other way."

Two teenage boys who had no family and were working for their subsistence in a tea shop, one evening after everyone had eaten and left, told me about the misfortunes that fell upon people they knew because of "the look".

- [My notes] There was a farmer [they said] who had two pieces of land ... that produced exceedingly well, but the next year he had bad luck. He died soon after harvest, and the next year, when the son planted it, it produced nothing. They [the two boys] took this to be the result of someone's looking -- envying -- the farmer's yield. They also told me about a man in the valley of Sayghan who had rented land on a half-and-half tenant contract and planted it heavily. Early on it seemed to be doing well and people admired it, but in the end it yielded minimally. Moreover, the following winter an earthquake destroyed the house, killed five or six people, several animals, and the man himself. Such bad luck came from "the look," they said.

Negative consequences of ritual mistakes.

Just as performing certain rituals brings well being the failure to perform them properly might the cause for things to go wrong.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] It is dangerous to make a mistake in reciting the Qur'an. That is because God spoke it. It is a sin to make a mistake in reciting it. To do it right has merit. ... [I]n western Afghanistan the pronunciation of the Qur'an is an intense bone of contention between Sunnis and Shica. Dari [Afghan Persian] has no sound equivalent to the Arabic "dhahl." Shica believe it should be pronounced "z"; Sunnis believe it should be pronounced "d".

This is no mere academic quarrel: it manifests the real concerns of a people who said that ritual makes a difference in their relationship with God and affects their affairs.

- [More from Sheikh Gholam Ali] To mispronounce the name of God is also a mistake and a sin. That is, you have to be careful. The kalima, or the word of witness, [There is no God except God and Muhammad is the messenger of God] is dangerous to say because if you don't say "except God", then you are saying "There is no God..." So you must never start to say it and not finish; it is especially dangerous for the dying, because they may not be able to finish. Failure to perform a ritual precisely may cause harm.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali, regarding the necessity to keep urine from dripping on the body] If a man is careless about purity his cow

might give less milk, he might spill some of it, but it might really be a loss of material things. It wouldn't last as long.

Certain other acts might be considered dangerous or deleterious:

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] I know a pretty woman who was going to the bathroom, and while going there, because it was raining, she avoided some mud and stepped on ashes taken from an oven, and she heard a squeak, and ever since then the children she bore did not live more than two months. She came to my mother's cousin and gave him a lot of money to cure it. She knew it was not a medical thing because she bore the children and they did not live. He said, "You must have done something you shouldn't have!" And his eyes rolled when he talked and he acted mysterious. And finally she said that she had stepped on the ashes. That made it very grave.

Jinn sickness [jinndi, tars khordan].

Besides the processes that operated mechanically others worked through the agency of spirits, of which there were several kinds, jinns, fairies (par?s), and deos. Jinns had been seen by many people, an experience called "being frightened" (tars khordan) and was considered a cause of illness and misfortune. [36]

- [Teacher in Bamian] When jinns enter the body, they make a person insane or cause fits. It is possible to be "frightened" in the day time, but more often it happens at night. To avoid seeing jinns people liked to carry lanterns because jinns run from the light. There are two kinds of jinns. One is like a normal person in his body, but when he sees a man he fights with him. This is known as m?dary?l and is dangerous. The other kind of jinn is like a child and is harmless. It merely causes petty irritations.

A Hazara leader from Panjaw said that his cousin was "hit" by jinns:

- His face was twisted and he had a temperature. He couldn't eat anything and finally by the power of reciting holy things [charms and Qur'anic verses] he was cured without taking a particle of any type of medicine.

A man from Mazar-i-Sharif indicated that he had been affected by jinns.

- "I myself am not clean in my skin. Jinns have put a shadow on me." [37]

A man from Laghman said that people who step on ashes at night and go to old grave yards alone get jinn sickness.

- Whenever a person is afraid of jinns, his heart trembles and that is the beginning of jinn sickness.

He also said that jinn disease came to people on Fridays or Wednesday nights.

- People go to dark unclean places where ashes and dirty things are thrown out. Graveyards are also places where people don't like to go, especially after dark. Flour mills are also places for jinns and fairies, at night especially. Gardens and forests full of trees are full of jinns, especially forests full of bushes and trees and large gardens. Women are not permitted to go to such places much.

A man from Mazar-i-Sharif explained also that jinn sickness can be

inherited.

- Some people get this jinn sickness by inheritance, such as my own self, because my mother was sick with this jinn sickness. The reason for getting this jinn sickness is walking on ashes on Friday nights. If the jinn is Muslim it will not harm anyone; otherwise the non-Muslim ones will hurt people if they walk on them [in the ashes] without saying "By the name of God." [Sick persons] either stepped on children of jinns or killed them and they [the jinns] take revenge. If you say "By the name of God" then the jinns run away and are not stepped on. If you hurt any one of their children, the jinns will do the same thing to you.

Jinns can cause harm in other ways.

- [My notes] Gholam Ali said there is a man being oppressed by jinns in his village. Large rocks are being thrown at him. Some have broken his windows. Also, someone came and carried out a bag of wheat weighing 45 ser [almost 700 pounds, too much for two people], and the people living in his house never heard it; they scattered a part of the wheat on the ground. The harassment has been going on for five months. The man moved out and moved to another place for a while, but it continued, so he moved back to his own house. He is being ruined by this jinn, Gholam Ali says. Men have come to make noise and chase jinns away to no avail. There are four families there, two landowners and two tenant farmers. The other three families are going to the government with a petition. They want the government to know about this, so that if the man is killed by the jinns, the government won't blame them. The government, Gholam Ali says, will pay attention to talk about jinns.

Other spirits and preternatural beings.

In discussions about jinns, people inevitably referred to other spirits, such as fairies (par?s) and ?ls (also called m?dary?ls, mentioned above) and deos. These seem to have originated from Persian, Turkish, and other central Asian cultures, but they were not always precisely separated from notions of jinns. All of such beings were considered malevolent influences.

Fairies [par?s] were sometimes said to be benign but some people considered them dangerous. The Teacher in Bamian said that fairies are beautiful and can capture a man's fantasy:

- He has to think about the fairies so he is out of his mind all the time.

Sheikh Gholam Ali said deos are large, powerful beings who control fairies.

- If a man sees a deo he will die within a few days; if he sees a fairy, he falls in love with a fairy and goes crazy. Deos are very dangerous, but they don't come where people are, only once a year. A deo will travel around the earth once a year. He cannot come down to earth because their king has told them to stay away from men, though some of them do. [38]

In the context of talk about spirits people also mentioned preternatural beings. ?ls, ?lkhatas, m?dary?ls, and j?garkhors were creatures who had the power to steal some part of the body, usually

the liver. A man from Laghman said that an ?l likes to take the liver of a child as soon as it is born:

- When the mother puts the child in the water [to bathe it immediately after birth] the child dies.

Alkhatus are old women who similarly eat a part of a new mother or a child.

- [A Hazara man] Mothers are afraid of being frightened by a spirit like this. A mother will never leave the child alone for fear an alkhatu will come and injure the child while she is out.

Jigarkhors [liver eaters] are women who eat the livers of newborn children. A Hazara man said that a jigarkhor eats livers, especially those of women in childbirth. They also may eat the liver of the child. I was told that jigarkhors reside in Kalu and Yak Awlang.

The caprice of misfortune and the will of God.

Many misfortunes appeared to take place for no obvious reason and economic hardships seemed to be driven by invisible forces and spirits. As a result, there was uncertainty about the causes of stressful circumstances, leading to questions about God's involvement in human affairs. In addition to the sense that the causes of illness were unknown there was the general sense that unknown forces could destroy one's general well being.

Fortuitous events could upset the delicate balance of resource and labor that enabled a peasant to subsist and prosper. An example is the case of Hosain Mamad, who had at one time been wealthy, for he was the son of a strong Mir. His land produced, it was said, as much as twenty kharwars[39] of wheat, so he was one of the richest persons in his area.

- He had lots of animals, which helped to fertilize his land. Able to entertain many notables, he once fed several hundred guests when a prominent Sayyed came to visit, an occasion that imparted him much prestige. He spent his time supervising work on his land and in reading. Unfortunately he had no surviving sons who might have joined in the development and supervision of his resources, and only one daughter -- a circumstance that eventually caused his good fortune to decline. He adopted a son from a family having twelve children, but the boy turned out to be deaf and could not do much work. Also, he lost two wives and when I met him had a third. Now in his old age, he had much less land because he had sold some to purchase his wives. He had fewer animals, and because they provided much less manure for his fields, his land produced only four or five kharwars. Too old to work it himself, he divided the yield in half with a tenant worker, who, it was said, cheated him because he could not supervise the work as he once did.

The productivity of one's wives profoundly affected one's social status and well being. My friend, Mir Hasan, had three wives in succession and all of them died leaving him with no children. A fourth wife eventually gave birth to two children but they were only daughters. Everyone wanted sons, and he was a man of repute and was embarrassed by these misfortunes. The fourth wife herself said that a man of his prominence ought to have a son, so searched for

another wife for him. She chose a girl who, after the marriage, was discovered to have tuberculosis. Gholam Hasan and his two wives and two daughters, moved to Kabul to obtain treatment for the second wife, and after more than a year of treatment in Kabul she seemed well enough to return home. But three months later, when she had returned to Kabul for a check-up, she had made a turn for the worse; streptomycin was no longer effective. Within a year she died, leaving Hasan Ali no son. He had expended essentially all he had, first to pay her bride price and then to pay for medicines and the expenses of living in Kabul. He was in debt, though he still had land. He had suffered socially in his failure to have a son, suffered financially in the loss of most of his wealth, and emotionally through the death of his wife. At one point he said to me, "I have had more trouble than anyone in the whole world."

A possible explanation for misfortune, therefore, was the will of God. In one sense God's will lies behind all prosperity and misfortune, as the words *barakat*, (blessing, miracle power) and *xayr*, (grace) imply.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] If you have *barakat*, your sugar or flour, everything, will last long. If you don't have *barakat*, nothing will. Satan will eat it. That is why you say "By the name of God" when you begin to eat it. We believe that if a Muslim kills a sheep and an infidel kills a sheep, the one killed by the Muslim will feed more people. That is *barakat*. You can be filled up on less food. God's favor or disfavor is thus a material resource; His attitude, for good or for ill, works like a material entity. When things go badly, it was God's will. No agents of misfortune, whether malicious spirits or magical forces can work except as God allows. They function within His sovereign purpose; in the final analysis they are only His agents. When a man gets jinn sickness or his child dies or his crops fail it is not merely because the spirits and magical forces have done it; God has willed it. Jinns, fairies, and "the look" are no other than devices God uses to work his purposes.

When things go wrong, God apparently has withdrawn His favor, His *barakat*, as the farmer from the Markaz said. The claim that God is sovereign over all things coupled with the evident absence of prosperity implies that somehow people had lost God's favor. For some reason God was not pleased. Could human failures have brought on their distress? This was the implication of the common reference to the year that cholera swept the country, 1915, as *s?l-e t?w?n*, "the year of punishment". "They believe that God was angry with them," the young teacher's college graduate from Tolwara told me. So it might be said that there could be yet another type of distress that people had to bear: Besides the diseases, the poverty, and the social tension, there was the question of God's displeasure. Could God be angry with me?

In Bamian tea houses the economic decline of the region was a frequent topic of conversation. Once, a tea shop keeper ruminated on how badly things were going.

- [My notes] He noted that Wardak and Mashriqi were doing

better but Bamian was getting worse. In former times all the shops in the market were busy and the market was held two times a week. Now half the shops were closed most of the time. And they had a periodic market only once a week. Also, the young people from Bamian had missed out on school. Only one had been to the university. He wondered what was wrong. "Maybe," he said, "that idol has something to do with it", referring to the ancient colossal statue of Buddah only 100 yards away. Just how the idol could have brought such bad luck he did not say.

Other generations had tried to destroy the buddahs; the Taleban would accomplish it in the 1990s.

That the decline of their economy might be taken as a mark of moral decline was explicit in a conversation with a Markaz farmer about the topic.

- [My notes] He expressed the belief that the decline resulted from a loss of barakat, "blessing". I asked if perhaps population growth was a cause for the decline,[40] but he insisted that the loss of blessing was more significant. The price of wheat, he said, had gone up 500 percent in the previous four years, from ten afghanis to fifty afghanis per ser. That could not be due to an increase in population, which obviously grows at a slower rate. A more plausible explanation, he thought, was the lack of blessing. A shopkeeper in the market nearby agreed with him. He pointed out that the western region of the Hazarajat used to produce large amounts of ghi (clarified butter) but it was hardly producing a surplus now. The prices used to be about eight times that of salt, he said, but now it is about twenty times as much.[41] He felt the reason was the lack of blessing. Things got worse each year, he said.

One way or another, the most common explanation for the poor times was the moral failure of the people. It was not uncommon for people to propose that their sins had prompted God to withdraw his favor. A respected mature Sunni man, a hajji working as a clerk in the government, plainly laid the blame on the morals of the people. Several other people said as much in different ways: a Sunni man from the town, a Shica elder ("Look at us! Everyone is for himself", he said.), a truck driver, an elderly woman who made an open show of talking to me in front of her neighbors, whom she accused of no longer being "musulmân". A truck driver saw the moral decline of his age as a sign that Doomsday was imminent: "Now is the end of times." [42]

An ontology of efficacy

In this section I summarize (a) the kinds of power believed to influence human affairs and (b) the ideal qualities considered to be grounds of authority that would enable one to be imputed with ability to exercise efficacious means of delivering or protecting from misfortune.

Kinds of Power.

There are essentially two kinds of powers at work in the world, magical and sacred.

MAGICAL POWER. By magical power we mean those

relationships in the world that operate mechanically.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali's mother to J. Dudley Woodberry] This is a world of means. God seems to accept means. [43]

- [In another context] The night of your marriage and your death cannot be changed by anyone, but these shrines help if it is God's will and His permission. And if the death of the child is not assigned to that disease he won't die. If it is God's own will for someone to live, no disease can kill him. But there are two types of deaths. One, "induced death", is one done on purpose -- like if you go to places where death is inevitable, if you sit under a brick wall or walk into a flood. The other, "absolute death", is death by the will of God, and that is when your life is meant to end in this world. That of course can't be changed, no matter what medicines you take or which shrine you visit.

- [A pious Shica man from Panjao, just back from the pilgrimage to Karbala] Keeping a small Qur'an with you is good. The Qur'an will save you from real dangers. You, for example, will be saved from a falling wall. A Qur'an will save you from accidental deaths. It won't save you from real death but it will save you from accidental death, improve health, and so on. Young people will be saved from accidental deaths but not from real God-willed deaths. The Qur'an can keep you from sicknesses when God wants but not against the will of God. It's like a charm.

This is why charms worked: they were devices for influencing affairs that operated mechanically. In theory anyone could produce them, although some people knew better how to make them and some practitioners could have had special access to non-empirical beings and so could make more powerful charms.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] These things [charms] are tools, things to use, like a gun. But you should use them properly, not to do wrong.

The way a charm was made was critical to its effectiveness.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] A person who makes charms must be 'clean' but he doesn't have to be a Muslim. Even a Hindu or a Jew can make good charms.

Indeed the charms of non-Muslims, who were said to be unscrupulous, were more feared. But the purposes for which charms were made could be anything. They need not be especially noble. [44]

SACRED POWER. Sacred power, in contrast, operates through personal connections with God, who favors those close to him, his "friends," and with the forces of the cosmos. It is axiomatic, constitutive and legitimative, bringing to objects, statuses and relations a sense of the cosmic, the ineffable. [45]

Walis. Even though Muslims teach that prophets ended with Muhammad, the notion that God has special "appointees, friends", walis, (Arabic "friend, protector, ruler") who have the power to do miraculous works (karâmât) (but not to do the evidentiary miracles of prophets, mu`jezât), became a widely accepted concept; eventually (with much reluctance and disputation) even the `ulamâ' accepted the

idea. The famous eleventh century sufi Ali Ibn Uthman Hujwiri, whose home city was Ghazni (and whose tomb in Lahore is the most celebrated shrine in Pakistan) wrote the earliest statement in the Persian language about the mystical status of walis:

God has saints [walis] whom He has specially distinguished by His friendship and whom He has chosen to be the governors of His kingdom... and has peculiarly favored with diverse kinds of miracles [karâmât] and has purged of natural corruptions and has delivered from subjection to the lower soul and passion, so that all their thoughts are of Him and their intimacy is with Him alone ... Through the blessing of their advent the rain falls from heaven, and through the purity of their lives the plants spring from the earth and through their spiritual influence the Moslems gain victories over unbelievers. (Hujwiri 1911 [circa. 1072]: 212,3) [46]

Pirs as walis. For the ordinary person the problem was how to recognize a real wali, for it was said (by Hujwiri and other authorities) that a person could be a wali without knowing it. His identity, in any case, could go unrecognized by those people around him. Moreover, the criteria for recognizing a wali varied according to the sect.

The concept of pir. The term pir designated a person considered a wali. I use the term "wali" when referring to the ideal concept and "pir" when referring to an actual personage or a social status. Roy (1986: 227) says the word ruhani, literally "a spiritual person," referred among the Shica to a member of the clergy and among the Pushtun tribes to a Sufi pir who was not an âlim. Each of these terms enshrined a certain aspect of the concept of "sainthood" (the quotation marks here indicate a special cluster of meanings only loosely related to the usual meaning in English): the putative possession of extraordinary spiritual or sacred power (ruhaniyât) deriving from close friendship (wulâyat) with God and a profound spiritual experience. A pir was a wali whose special powers were put to use in the service of his followers (mur?d). For those who professed belief in walis the crucial issue was how to recognize them. In real life the indications were vague and in any case the sacred status of a person was never certain. The terms used for a pir differed, however, among the sects. In the interest of brevity I foreground the Sunni perspective.[47]

A pir's qualities and services were quite different from those of a mullah.

- [An educated young Sayyed in Kabul, in English] A pir is someone you fear, because he has supernatural power or connections [with spiritual powers]. By contrast, an âlem is someone you honor because of his knowledge of spiritual truths. You kiss the hand of a pir lest he be unhappy. If he is happy, you have barakat.

- [A government official, Sunni] A mullah is a servant. He is hired by the people to lead prayers in the mosque, teach the children and the like. But the pir is different. He teaches how to live, how to get merit. He is descended from one of the walis. He has power. But the services of a pir were not limited to the present life. Indeed,

his mediation on behalf of his mur?id after death, when their faith is to be examined by two fierce angels, was one of a pir's most important functions.

- [Teacher in Bamian] People believe the pir will help in this time of troubling. The pir's karâmat will help them at this time. It will not keep them from this trouble, but it will make it less serious, so that the time will be easier, so that they [the deceased] can answer the questions [of the angels]. It doesn't help to be a mullah. A mullah will need a pir for this too.

Everyone should have a pir.

- [Young teacher in Bamian] A Muslim must have a pir to be Muslim. Every Muslim must have a pir but of course these Hazara boys probably don't even know who their pir is.

A pir's friendship with God and thus access to spiritual and sacred realms endowed him with a responsibility to minister to the needs of his mur?id. His favor in any case could bring them well being.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] The importance of the pir's pleasure with me is that the pir has been given by God. He is God's friend. God likes him. If God's pir likes me then God will like me. It's like this: the governor is appointed by the King; if the governor is happy with me, then the King will be happy with me.

- [Young teacher in Bamian] The pir of Paytakht has lots of barakat because he is near to God. His mur?id get blessing too if they treat him well, because he is sent by God. He prays a lot and God hears his prayers. He is close to God.

- [Young teacher in Bamian] For the pir to be happy is good for them [his mur?id]. His favor means blessing for them.

- [A young educated Sayyed in Kabul, in English] People usually come to a pir to get blessing, so that through the pir their troubles will be eased. So they try to make the pir happy, to win his favor and his prayers for their welfare. Although this looks like only a perfunctory prayer, it is the means of barakat.[48]

Idealized Grounds of authority.

There are three general bases for the establishment of authority by those who would provide relief and protection from non-empirical sources of misfortune, scriptural knowledge, sacred descent, and mystical association.

Stated somewhat differently, religious authority derives from knowledge of God, and one comes to know God through knowledge of His word, through being an offspring of one of His chosen (His prophets and awliya', or "friends) and/or through personal familiarity attained via mystical experience. [On these three foundations] individuals claim to represent Him and to have rightful authority over others and over social institutions.[49]

The most eminent authorities combined all three. [50]

KNOWLEDGE, INCLUDING OF MAGIC. Knowledge, especially of the authoritative texts, the Quran and the Hadith (the corpus of material about the Prophet's life and informal teachings) was a fundamental basis of authority.[51] Those enjoying highest

esteem had studied Islamic subjects elsewhere. India, at the Deobandi School, was the preferred place until the 1960s when Egypt became the preferred locus of Islamic education. Upon returning to Afghanistan graduates could claim, or were imputed by others, to have knowledge of Islamic subjects, including sihr, magic. Sihr was considered a necessary subject in an Islamic education. The ulamâ officially disapproved of the use of magic, but they studied the subject so as to distinguish the jugglery of charlatans from the evidentiary miracles (mucjez?t) of prophets and the miraculous works (kar?mat) of wal?s or pirs.[52] Knowledge of magic was in any case said to be an important competence, since it was said to be efficacious in controlling jinns and other malevolent forces, even though an ?lem might choose not to use it; Shica dogma was that the Sayyeds had such knowledge.[53] The practical advantage of knowing sihr was the ability to make charms (tacw?z) and divine the future (f?l).[54] The following is Sheikh Gholam Ali's formula for producing a charm that renders impotent:

- If you want to lock [render impotent] a person with black magic [j?du] you may prepare a tawband [string-tie]. You use thread or silk or the fresh guts of an animal. You knot the thread seven times, each time reciting the charm. Then you put it in something small or wrap it in a tiny cloth bag, and hide it in some place special such as the ground, especially near a stream. If you use silk, it is much more difficult to break open because silk, when you tie it, is hard to untie. If you use animal intestines, it is even more effective. When it dries, the man's ability to procreate will dry and gradually he will become sick and die. This is really true. I know of at least two people who had to release their wives as virgins because they had become impotent. There was a black charm on them. The mullah who makes it will promise to return the money if the victim can have intercourse. Of course in this case it will be expensive, maybe even 7,000 afghanis.

He did not say what "reciting the charm" meant.

SACRED DESCENT. Another ground of authority was descent from a sacred family. Lineal claims are of two kinds, however: through biological descent from the Prophet or one of his close associates; or through a succession of teachers or instructors whose knowledge putatively goes back to Muhammad. [55] The most widely recognized lineal claims are those of the Sayyeds, the direct descendants from Fatima (the Prophet's daughter) and Ali (his cousin and one of his first converts), although, as is well known, Sunnis and Shicas dispute the political importance of the Alid line. Theologians of both traditions have taught that esoteric knowledge, special guidance from God, miracle power, sinlessness and infallibility pass with lesser force through collateral lines of Muhammad's descendants, and the pious of both sects pronounce blessings on the family in their prayers. For the Shica it is a sacred duty to love and venerate the Sayyeds; to mistreat them could bring misfortune.[56] Sunnis also venerate the descendants of close associates of Muhammad, although many of those families claim as

their special status their mystical connection to a line of notable Sufi saints (see below).[57]

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE. The ways that direct experience of sacred entities is obtained are various but only some of them are considered authentic, those recognized as Sufism.

Sufism. The other way of reckoning descent, recognized by sufis, is by lines of authorized ritual leaders putatively going back to the early pious leaders of the faith. The lineages are therefore "spiritual." [58] The most notable sufi lineages in Afghanistan were the leaders of the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders.[59] The successors of the sufi masters were said to have experienced gnosis, oneness with God through the recitation of the name(s) of God. Sufis seek experiential knowledge of God (mu`ârif) rather than rote knowledge (ilm) or deductive understanding (fiqh). By becoming enthralled with God, experiencing Him in an ecstatic union, they would gain purity and possibly unique powers.[60]

- [A Sunni official in Mazar i Sharif]. Grace and power comes through renouncing the world and becoming a faqir as well as through reciting the name of God in the dhikr [recitations of God's names], giving offerings (khayrât), and so on. A faqir is a man who renounces the world, gives himself to reciting God's names, to prayer, and so on. He may beg for his food but he may not. He just lives on what others give him.

- [A retired official from Ghazni; courtesy of J. Dudley Woodberry]. There are two things in us as human beings: worldly wishes, like desires for food, and sexual pleasures; and the spirit. If we can conquer our actions and thinking, all the world would be under our power even small microbes or particles as well as huge animals. Closeness to God comes from this improvement in our worldly desires, which often control all our actions and thoughts. If our spirit governs our body, then we are close to God and we can do all kinds of things which look impossible to ordinary men. It has to be done by practice. That's what real Sufis do: they struggle against worldly desires. These bodily desires govern us and we can't disobey them, and as a result we are weak. These holy men have conquered their bodily desires.

To dramatize the unity of their spirit with God, some pirs claimed (or their followers after their deaths claimed for them) that they had in their dreams vivid encounters with Muhammad and other sacred heroes, manifestations of their sacred status.[61]

Anyone could gain a reputation for divine access by the assiduous practice of sufi rituals. In the words of an educated Sayyed in Kabul, "A man can become a wali by working at holiness." In this sense someone could be said to be "very sufi." A man in Mazar i Sharif, speaking of a Sunni pir, said to me, "The pir is very faqir. He is very sufi."

A crucial element of the sufi movement was the relationship between the pir and his mur?id, in which the murid should be obedient to his master with "an absolutely unquestioning submission to [his] spiritual dictatorship." [62] As al Ghazali put it: "Let him

know that the advantage he gains from the error of his sheikh, if he should err, is greater than the advantage he gains from his own rightness, if he should be right.”[63] Once the murid is qualified by his master, he is said to have “divine grace”, “transmitted by the chain” of authorities going back to Muhammad “who is not only the recipient of revelation and the expositor of the divine message but also -- for the Sufi -- the first link in the initiatic chain....”[64]

A man who acquired purity through gnostic union with God was said to have unique powers, able to write effective charms.

- [A man from Mazar i Sharif]. The holy heads of different orders [tariqats] are called Hazrats. They have conquered [obtained power from?] some of the holy excerpts [of the Quran] by reciting them hundreds of times. They have been authorized to write charms that forgive sins and they have the power to authorize others to write the charms. ... They clean what's called their eternal spirit that is, they get rid of some of the bad habits, worldly habits and the like, and they get good habits. Bad habits are being jealous or revengeful, selfish in a great amount, telling lies, gossiping. These are all bad habits that belong to normal, worldly people. Getting rid of these things is called cleaning the spirit. People with the Sufi orders [tariqat] try to do this. They recite some holy phrases during the day as well as during the night. They do this under the direction of someone who is mature in these things. It is like this in worldly things; you always need a teacher.

But the term mur?id has a dual meaning in practice.[65]

- [An educated Sayyed, son of a Sunni pir from Koh Daman] There are two kinds of mur?id. The people who learn tariqat [the sufi way of worship] from my father, for instance, are mur?id. Tariqat means 'way' and it means the way to live, to follow earnestly after spiritual things. The other kind of mur?id are those who do not learn from a pir or a teacher but who come to him for charms and blessing and bring him gifts. They often live too far away to study under him and are full time farmers anyway. They come only to get spiritual help, and to give him something for his services. They are mur?id in the sense that they turn to him for help and pay him respect, but they do not learn tariqat. Tariqat is not taught so much anymore. Few learn tariqat anymore.

The relationship between pir and murid in the second type described here has been called "maraboutic sufism" by some authors, after the French term for similar practice in North Africa.[66] While the formal practice of sufism has received the most attention in the orientalist literature, it is likely that the "maraboutic" form of venerating a pir has always been more common than the more formal and idealized relationship.[67]

- [Teacher in Bamian] The followers of a pir are his disciples [mur?id]. Most of his disciples have only occasional contact with him, although they regard him as their pir. They come and visit the pir every three or six months, or every year.

Unauthorized methods of mystical experience. Sufism is regarded as the authorized tradition of obtaining mystical experience,

but there were other kinds of specialists whose ecstatic experience was outside of a Sufi circle.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] I used to go see Pir Khalifa, who died. He was very dirty and he would curse people. He was a Sunni. He wanted to talk differently, so he used different words than we usually use. He would talk to invisible persons who were supposed to be his servants. He would tell them to go and tell the Sultan using an old word for the king to go and do such and such. People called him majzub ["attracted" i.e., to God, "ecstatic", "crazy"]. These people love God so much that they seem to be crazy.

And there were other methods of seeking contact with spiritual realms. Such as by having a vision.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] There was a man in my village who made carpets out of felt -- he came to be known as Sheikh Abdullah. He was almost the lowest rank in the society. But then suddenly talk spread among the women that in a dream Hazrat Ali had put his hand on this man's shoulder when he was sleeping and said, "Wake up. You are a nazar karda." That is, "You are someone that a prophet or wali has looked upon. You're going to be someone important." In three months he was so important that the people said, and still some people say, that he was seen in Baghdad at the same time that he was here, so he was in two places at once. He understood the language of the animals. They also said that you could see the marks of Ali's fingers on the shoulder of his shirt. But after his prominence rose for about three years, it decreased, and after seven or eight years he is almost unknown. He used to go barefoot. He was a Sunni, and was called Sheikh Abdullah. He was skeptical of me when I went to see him. He said, "I know that some people come here to test me, but a man of God cannot be tested."

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] I used to know a man in Herat who along with me used to give charms [perhaps his uncle?]. He later became a sheikh. He did this by having a vision in the night, in which he saw Ali. He is Shica. The next day his wife went to the bath and told her lady friends that this had happened and the news flew around fast. He sat at home, alone, growing a beard, wearing a cloak and a turban. He was in a daze or a trance. And he said rather incomprehensible things about his talk with Ali. Eventually he gained a wide reputation for having spiritual powers. And many people came to see him, and especially women. His charms became very popular. Eventually he was caught sleeping with one of the women, which spoiled his popularity somewhat. So his murid have faded now somewhat. But he still operates. He is called a sheikh, not a sayyed.

A way that was generally admired, if seldom practiced, was to renounce the world; in which case one became a faqir. An educated Sayyed woman from Kunar said that one of her relatives had become a faqir.

- My father's brother's son was a general in the army under Habibullah Khan. He had not done qas?da pukhta kardan [a method

of controlling jinns, see below], but one night in his sleep he dreamed that he was in a large meeting of people dressed in white clothing. He wanted to come in to them and join them but they refused, saying that he could come in, that he had the right to come in [because he was Syyed?], but he could not wear the clothes he was wearing, which was his military uniform. The next morning he took all of his clothes, military dress and everything, and gave them to Habibullah Khan and told them he would no longer serve as an officer in his army. He gave away all of his wealth to the poor, put on a begger's bowl and a long simple shirt, and he wore that until he died. He no longer worked, and he simply played the part of a faqir. He gained many murîd because he prayed for them. They often gave him gifts, but rather than keep them, he gave them away to other poor people, so he was never wealthy himself.

Several terms were used for irregular sacred figures but the distinctions among them were sometimes blurred.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] A faqir is a man who controls his human desires completely. He doesn't care for money, even laks [hundreds of thousands] of it. He doesn't care for food or a wife or a house. It commonly means a poor man but it really means a man who cares about nothing but God.

- [A Sunni man in Mazar i Sharif] A faqir and a malang are alike in many ways, but a person is only a malang as long as others see no spiritual power in him. He can be faqir if he is seen to have spiritual dedication and power.[68]

A hermit living in a hovel near Bulola in Bamian was called a malang.

- [Young teacher in Bamian] A malang is a kind of sufi. He lives like a sufi. He has forsaken the world and all affairs, and he busies himself only with the name of God. But some malangs are irregular [ghair i mustaqin]. They have no [formal sufi] order [tariqat]. ... A malang such as the Malang of Bulola will be seen as crazy until he does something great. If he does that he will be seen as a wali.

- [Another man in Bamian said of the same malang] These people are very important. The world is held up by such people.[69]

Sheikh Gholam Ali used similar language for darwishes.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] Darwishes are very powerful as sacred people. Shah Abbas is said to have been a darwish. He acts like a malang but he isn't one. A darwish is either a religious man who doesn't care about money or he is a King who doesn't know how to be poor [and he is trying to be poor]. I have never seen one. I have seen malangs, but it is difficult to know whether he has power. [70]

The teacher in Bamian, in the statement above distinguished between walis who are mustaqîm ("direct", "legitimate") and walis who are ghayr-i mustaqîm ("indirect", "outside the main line"). The latter were said to have had a direct experience of the supernatural without certification in a sufi order, or perhaps they have acquired power through special ritual ordeals. Such people were of course

rejected by Sufis as well as the jurists, who denounced them as practicing mere "jugglery." [71] The ordinary public, however, tended to impute "divine grace" and sacred power to such people. Jewett early in the twentieth century says that people said that God has taken their minds and God speaks through them.

[72]

Among the Shica the term sheikh was used for a person who had acquired power by the use of magical techniques. [73] For this reason a sheikh could be a marginal person, but because of his supposed esoteric knowledge he could have powers like those of a true faqir.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] A sheikh makes ["gives"] charms. He has supernatural power. A mullah can only preach in the mosques and people can ask him some questions. A sheikh may never pray. He may say something that is contrary to religion. And he may say, "I'm not in such good mental health", to show he is preoccupied with God. And he may say something about Muhammad. Like the one I met in Jabul us Saraj. Many people thought he was a powerful man. He slobbered on his shirt he was the dirtiest man I know. So a sheikh has supernatural powers. He might be upset or he might do wrong things to your way of thinking but you shouldn't believe what you see.

Such people were said to have power over jinns. According to Sheikh Gholam Ali's mother (courtesy of J. Dudley Woodberry), a woman affected with jinn sickness could become a sheikh by making use of her special relationship to the jinn.

- Sometimes these women that are loved by jinns end up becoming sheikhs themselves. They ask their jinn friends, for example, to bring them things and to answer questions and finally to find things which have been lost or at least to guide a person that has lost them. In this case the woman that is the sheikh doesn't have to be pious she doesn't have to have clean clothes and a clean body and heart and life, like an ideal Muslim. But sheikhs that do things written in Arabic rather than with figures and numbers and can get things done for them because of the holiness of the method they apply, particularly because of their own clean mouth, they usually don't do things which are against Islamic faith. For example, they don't make bad charms, they don't try to make two people fight or dislike each other. Or they don't try to make a man divorce his wife, or make a woman fall in love with another man.

Sheikh Gholam Ali described the ritual ordeal that one must endure in order to get control of jinns and fairies.

- If you want the king of fairies under your control, you have to get completely clean. Your clothes have to be clean. You have to do wudhû, (the minor ablutions before prayer). If you want to take a bath, you must do wudhû first. But then you go to a room that is joined to a shrine. You go there because in that place the fairies are free to come to you. They won't come in front of all the people. You must be very brave, and your bravery is based on your belief in what you recite. This is important. If you don't believe that it will save

you, then anything might scare you and you might try to run away. Then you would be hurt, blinded or paralyzed or have palsy, etc. You recite for forty or forty-five nights. You sit down facing Mecca. Sometimes the room turns white like an egg. In the room there is no lamp, so you have to know what to say by heart, and usually you are afraid and may close your eyes. You start at ten or eleven at night, but for forty days and nights you have to eat only one date every day. You have to say these incantations hundreds or thousands of times a day. This is why mullahs have large rosaries many sufis have them. They are very long. A man cannot sleep during these twenty days. He becomes very skinny and pale. Even in the daytime, if he goes out to the bathroom, he must have a new wudhu. The jinns come and beg the man by the name of God to stop reciting this, and to go home. Then the man knows that he is doing something worthwhile. The fairies change themselves into a snake with fire in their nostrils. If the man is afraid, then the fairies will hit him, so he must be brave he could lose his mind or something. Then some beautiful girls come and beckon him. If he falls for the trick and reaches out for them, his hand could be cut off, and he would be finished... If he doesn't give in to the girls and the threats, suddenly he sees a white snake on top of the head of another snake and there are many other snakes with him. This is the king of the fairies or one of the kings of the fairies, for there are many kings in different places. Sometimes they say a king comes in gold, like a human sitting on a throne of gold, and he has all the wild animals like tigers and lions, etc., with him. And he says, "I want you to stop it. I'll give you three minutes...", etc., and suddenly the man hears crashes behind his head, as if a whole house would fall down, etc., but he must not turn his head. Then the king makes a deal with him: "What do you want?" The man should answer, "I want to have power over you." Then the king says. "I'll give you such number of fairies," and sometimes he himself agrees to be his slave. This depends on how powerful the phrase the man recites is, and how clean he is in his heart. The man gets the power and he can use it on the women who are sick.

Sheikh Gholam Ali actually tried to perform the ordeal. The incantation that he used was called the "Chihil Kâf" ["The Forty Kâfs"; kâf is a letter of the alphabet].

- On each of the 40 nights you say the Chihil Kâf millions of times. You repeat it and repeat it and shake your head. And as you recite, the whole room seems to you to take the shape of an egg. I recited it for six nights, and it had such a bad effect on me that my father stopped me. I learned it from my cousin who could cure people with his power over fairies. This was his masterpiece. He could just barely read and write, but he wrote it for me. That is all he knew.

Sheikh Gholam Ali had recited the incantation so many times without comprehension that he was unable to remember it syllable by syllable or phrase by phrase. He could only recite the whole incantation as one burst of syllables.

The ordeal that Sheikh Gholam Ali described may have been the same as what a Sayyed woman from Kunar called *qas?da pukhta kardan*, for it was supposed to enable a person to get control of jinns. [74]

- When Pâdshah Sâheb i Jâde Maywand [a famous pir] first came to Afghanistan there was the story that he had done *qas?da pukhta kardan*. He had been some years in India and he said that he had done it there, and so he obtained many *mur?d*. He was young. At first the *murîds* were often the more learned people, doctors, students, and so forth. But later his *murîd* dropped off in number, because it was rumored that he sometimes did sorcery [*jâdu*], which is widely considered wrong. Nevertheless some people, particularly the uneducated people, continued to come to him. She described the ordeal and the danger it entailed.

- *Qas?da pukhta kardan* is the ritual one goes through in order to get control of the spirits. It involves spending forty days alone in the desert, or perhaps near a shrine, primarily in an isolated place, reciting portions of the Quran and lengthy portions of other books in an effort to get control of the spirits. A person draws a circle around the area where he is reciting, and he is not supposed to leave this circle until he has completed the *qas?da pukhta kardan*.

My father's brother's son, [75] who was himself a Sayyed, in an effort to gain control of the spirits, attempted to do *qas?da pukhta kardan* but he could continue only twenty or twenty-five days. After that time he began to see only blood in all directions around him, and he finally had to give up, because he felt he was losing control of himself. After this time he had much trouble. Twelve of his children died. And after seeking medical help he went to many different pirs in Kabul and finally found one pir who was able to overcome this tragic, calamitous series of bad luck. The pir explained to him after he learned of the Sayyed's attempt to do *qas?da pukhta kardan* that this trouble had come to him because the jinns whom he had attempted to control were now after him. Only by the power of someone who controls them could they be held off. This pir told him to do the following things: to get seven pieces of cloth, large enough to be made into trousers [pantaloon] from seven different Hindu shops, to bring the ashes from seven fireplaces from seven households and to weigh his thirteenth child on a balance scale ... and to do this everyday for seven days. By doing this he succeeded in turning events in his favor. His thirteenth child and several succeeding children lived. He now has two sons and two daughters, although he is himself quite old. It is important for anyone who wants to do *qas?da pukhta kardan* to have the help of their ancestors. An ordinary man couldn't possibly undertake this ritual or complete this ritual... The Sayyed himself, the pir, told him he would have been killed, except for the good ancestry which he had, for his father had apparently done, or at least reputedly had done, the *qas?da pukhta kardan*.

III. The Culture of Efficacy in Practice

As a set of categories naming a certain "ontology," this

culture of efficacy was a resource for engaging with the problems of life. It was a set of categorically recognized entities, forces, and relationships that could be deployed (or ignored) according to individual interests in particular situations. One set among a plethora of cultural resources, these categories, along with the assumptions and expectations that they entailed, could be accessed when actions were to be taken, decisions made, or situations interpreted.

A cultural resource at risk

But when deployed in practice, the suppositions and expectations they represented were put at risk, tested against an empirical world. And they could fail in the event.[76] Charms might not work; prayers might not be answered; incantatory ordeals could exceed human possibility. Sheikh Gholam Ali once said to me, "There is a special charm that you can recite and you will see Muhammad, but it didn't work for me."

Indeed, people could take this ontology generally for granted and at the same time entertain doubts. A blind man who recited the Qur'an for a living said the following (courtesy of J. Dudley Woodberry):

- The jinns try to make humans be afraid of them and show themselves to us, but I haven't felt any, although I have been in many dark places alone in deserts to see whether people tell the truth. I tried to find out whether anything is there, and I walked along in the graveyards but felt nothing whatsoever. I personally believe that if people are afraid, or if they step on a jinn and cause injury to the jinn, they will get this jinn sickness for as long as they live, unless they are taken to holy places or to men such as good shaykhs.

In another context he said:

- A person who becomes bakhshi can tell the future, but I don't believe in it anyway. There are lots of fortune tellers in Mazar. Some look inside a drum. Others inside a mirror, etc. The one they took me to is a woman who hit me and hit the drum on top of my skull -- just laughable actions trying to get the jinns out of me and make them go away. Many of these people who try to get rid of jinns for the sick speak Urdu. They don't say anything holy, maybe a few words of Arabic, but mostly it is Urdu. It looks like all the jinns speak Urdu, but I can't believe in it.

He had no doubt that jinns existed or that they could cause sickness or that holy places and "good shaikhs" could cure, but, try as he might, he had encountered no jinns where they were supposed to be. And he scouted the powers of fortune tellers or the popular curers and their incantations.

Among the general population the uncertainty about who might be an actual wali – the difficulty of recognizing a real wali -- generated discussions about specific individuals, and in such conversations many people expressed doubt.

- [A Shica man from Shibar]. Usually these common men who give charms are not holy that is, they are not Sayyed and they don't avoid eating religiously unclean things. Among the Sayyeds of B--- some of them are not clean, and they are very sly,

and even try to have connections with people's wives if they can, and they steal people's money just like robbers. Yet they consider themselves holy and ask for gifts.

I heard people scoff at the hagiographic stories told about the power of certain pirs. Most of such people were educated and clearly had a secular bias. I briefly met a young urbanized Hazara, a Communist, in his home village.

- [My notes] Sultan is clearly urbanized. Criticized pirs and mullahs for robbing the people. Only the ignorant really follow them, he said. I think he embarrassed Hashem because Hashem later said that this man was too progressive. The young man also asked me if I knew Kishtmand; he felt sure I would know him. [I didn't.]

[77]

A Government official, a graduate of Kabul University, a subgovernor in Bamian, even challenged the idea that pirs were Islamic.

- [My notes] They are in fact bad for Muslims, he said. The only pir he acknowledged was the Quran and "Imam Azam" [Abu Hanifa, the eighth century Islamic jurist]. He disparaged even the concept of wali, and rudely interrupted the malik who was trying to say that people do believe in pirs.

Some educated Afghans did respect pirs, however, as indicated by the statements of educated people quoted above.

Sacred sources of help in practice

But the doubts about specific situations and individuals did not deter many from acting on the idealized conceptions of authority and competence entailed in the ontology of efficacy described above, especially when faced with serious concerns. Certain notable religious figures, some of them already mentioned in the previous discussion, were said to have power and they were cultivated and at times of distress sought out for help.[78] Here I refer to two kinds of sacred sources of help, the great pirs, and shrines, which were, of course, the tombs of deceased sacred authorities who even in death were said to be capable of giving "divine grace."

The great pirs.

THE COMBINATION OF SACRED DESCENT, ISLAMIC LEARNING, AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE. Several notable pir families were venerated by large numbers of murid. These families combined sacred ancestry with a reputation for learning and mystical experience. Seldom did a pir gain much of a following, no matter how great his education, without also belonging to a sacred ("noble") lineage. Also, the great pirs were credited – sometimes despite their denials – with having obtained "divine grace" through mystical means, which implied the achievement of inner purity and thus of sacred power.[79] The great pirs, therefore, were both pirs and culem?. Such individuals were popularly said to have miraculous powers – an imputation they generally denied. Elphinstone provides an example from the nineteenth century.

Some of these must have been engaged in voluntary imposture, but the three most eminent in Peshawar, when I was there,

disavowed all pretensions to supernatural powers. They were treated the highest respect, even the King refusing to be seated before them till he was pressed; but they did not seem to solicit these honours, and they discussed the conduct of government, and reprehended its vices and those of the nation with great freedom: the only art they seem to resort to for maintaining their high reputation, is great austerity of life; they are seldom very learned, and the two eminent saints that I saw were free from every kind of affectation and grimace, and only distinguished from other people by the superior mildness of their manners.[80]

The most influential family of pirs among the Sunnis of Afghanistan were the Mujaddidis, known as “Hazrats of Shor Bazaar,” who claimed descent from Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. Pirs of the Naqshbandi sufi order, they were focus of a wide network of murid, especially among the eastern Pushtun tribes. Also notable were the Gailani family, pirs of the Qadiriyya order, venerated by members of some eastern tribes. Another famous pir was Sayyed Nadir Khan of Kayan, pir of the Ismacilis.[81]

THE SERVICES OF PIRS TO THEIR FOLLOWERS.

The great pirs were able to provide many kinds of services to their murid by virtue of their extraordinary social and material advantages. Relatively wealthy and widely connected with persons of influence, the great pirs and their families could provide connections and support that would otherwise be unavailable to their murid.[82] The great pirs enjoyed an extraordinary degree of influence because of their social connections. They were linkages among their murid, and their organizational structures, through which they arranged for their murid to receive instruction and through which they collected gifts that gave them important means of political and economic leverage. Here, however, I focus on the curing and delivering services that pirs provided to their murid, and indeed to anyone who came to them.

- [An educated Sayyed woman, Sunni, from Kunar] Women are dependent on pirs and believe in them more than men because they have no one to listen to them. Very few situations are appropriate for women to expose their feelings, their griefs and hardships. Pirs are able to listen to them and provide some relief for their emotional tension. ... They have no one to talk to and so they have to go outside the household, outside the family, to find someone who will listen. A woman who can find a pir that will listen and help her will secretly hoard and hide away small amounts of food and money from her family so that she can take it all to the pir and get help.

There is a pir in Kabul, Sayyed Hasan, who is related to me. He is very fat, and talks like a child, but he prays for people. In fact, he prayed for me. He does not do sorcery [jādugarī]. I went to him because I was having many problems in my marriage. I explained my trouble, and he told me to come for three Thursday nights [the evening before Friday is considered especially auspicious] and he would pray for me. I came and each Thursday night he and his father

and five other of his disciples prayed for me at the same time. I watched the ceremony. They all said the evening prayer together and at the end they offered a prayer [duc?] for me. And at the end the pir reached into his pocket and gave me a handful of nuts and raisins. In a short time my troubles ceased.

- [Another statement by the same woman] We were living in a village outside of Kabul when my daughter was young, quite small. One night in the night time when it was dark, she suddenly screamed, frightened as if she had seen something. She was difficult to console. She kept looking in fright as if she had seen something terrible. A month later when I had wanted to wash her, she had a terrible spasm. I wrapped the child in a cloth and ran outside with her. A few moments later she was better. Nevertheless, almost every week she continued to have these frightening spasms. I took her to many different doctors. Then my father's brother's daughter told me that I should take her to a pir who would pray for us. When I went to see him in Shor Bâzâr we were taken to a very clean, beautiful room and when I brought the child into the room, the pir saw her and asked what was wrong. When I explained the problem of the child, he laughed and said that the child would be alright. He did a dam [incantation that is blown] over the child and then he prepared a d?t? [a piece of paper with a Quranic verse on it to be burned and the smoke inhaled by the child; d?t = smoke]. Also we were given a shuyest [a piece of paper with a Quranic verse on it to be washed in a glass of water; shuy = wash] which my daughter was to drink. Of course, certain spiritually effective verses were written on them. The pir also told me to bring the child back on Thursday night when he would puncture the ear lobes of the child. As this was Wednesday he could not do anything, he said, because Wednesday is not an auspicious time to do anything. However, because my husband did not accept the pir's authority he did not allow me to bring our daughter back to the pir on that night. Nevertheless, she never had a spasm again.

Certain pirs were notable for the efficacy of their charms.[83]

- [A Shica man from Chindawul, a neighborhood in Kabul] In Chindawul there is a Sayyed named Mir Ali Ahmad Aghâ whose charms are very good for all kinds of sicknesses, but he doesn't give charms for bad purposes [sorcery]. There are many Sayyeds who are very holy in my place, but people who have jinns come to Mir Ali Ahmad Aghâ and he gives them a charm and they are cured instantly. There are many people sitting along the street with their books, who give charms, but everyone is different. Many of them ask for money and say they are the descendants of Muhammad, but you can't believe everyone.

Patricia F. Wakeham has pointed out (in a personal communication) that certain names are common among the ordinary Shica, such as Khudâdâd, ["God given"], Khudâ Bakhsh, ["Gift of God"], Mowlâdâd, ["Given by the master"] or Pirdâd ["Given by the pir"], but they are not given to the children of Sayyeds. Each of these names suggests that a supernatural intervention by a sacred person

has occurred. The names do not necessarily indicate, as some Sunnis have told me with great seriousness, that a pir has directly procreated the child, but they do suggest that, in the minds of those who named the child, a blessing or miracle owing to the interventions of a sacred personage has made the birth of the child possible.

BEHAVIOR OF FOLLOWERS TO PIRS. Murids demonstrated their respect for their pir by overt expressions of deference and giving gifts (never payments) to their pirs.

Deference. Because of the uncertainty as to who might be a wali, people tended to be solicitous of pirs. They displayed their respect for pirs in formal ways, such as kissing the hand of a pir.

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] Mullahs say you should kiss the hand of your parents and of Sayyed, and the like, as a sign of honor. I have heard mullahs say that you should kiss only the hand of parents and Sayyeds.

This deference was also manifest in other courtesies:

- [From notes on a trip to Kahmard] There was a Sheikhzâda [a member of a famous sacred family] on the truck with us going up to the valley of Kahmard. He is from Koh Daman. They say he has mur?d in a few houses in Kahmard. Not very many. The driver was not a mur?d of this man but he treated him with great respect. He kissed his hand and refused to charge him anything.

- [From notes on a trip to Kamard] The driver stopped along the road at the shrine of Sultan Saheb, which they said is very famous. [It was late at night.] There is a malang there whom they tried to wake up and give money to, but they couldn't wake him up. Even though they shined lights on his little hut and pounded on his door and shouted at him he did not come out.

Elphinstone reported that early in the nineteenth century the veneration of people regarded as walis was common.

Many such saints are now flourishing, and the ignorance of their countrymen ascribes to them the gift of prophetic dreams and visions, and the power of working miracles. Even the higher classes have faith in their predictions, and the King often consults them on the most momentous affairs of his government.[84]

Jewett describes the veneration of a retarded man by an educated man in the time of Habibullah:

Some of the wealthier Afghans support and keep these holy beggars in their homes, with the idea that they thereby acquire merit and that it will bring them good luck. The mustofi [state accountant or adjudicator] kept one of these lunatics in his home in Kabul. The old idiot used to wear a skullcap all studded with Bukhara coins. He was given the best of food and everything he asked for and was treated with ceremonious respect. If he were tired, some of the household would massage his legs, while he reclined on cushions and babbled rubbish. Even the great mustofi himself would defer to him and make him presents.[85]

Remuneration. Murids did not pay their pirs for services; they gave them gifts. Gifts to pirs expressed friendship, never payment for services, in contrast to mullahs, who were always paid.

- [Teacher in Bamian] A pir may give charms, but he does not ask for payment. He may also refuse to give charms. Anyway, he gets no direct pay for this, because it is not good for a pir to request pay. But a mullah will write a charm for pay. He is paid directly. It is not a gift in return, as is given to a pir. It would be inappropriate for the pir to ask for money. He is descended from Imam Rabâni [referring to his own pir]. People give him 200 afghanis each, even 500 afghanis each, or more if they are rich.

- [Teacher in Bamian] The followers of Sahib Khan go to see him and they give him a thousand afghanis or five thousand afghanis and so on, depending on the wealth they have, or they give him a sheep, but mostly it is money.

- [Mir Hasan, regarding relations with his Ismacil? pir] When people come to visit a pir they bring him a gift, a sheep or goat, a carpet or money. The point is that he should be happy. They call this *duc? y pir* ("supplicating the pir"), that is, they make him happy. The point is that for him to be happy is good for them. His favor means blessing for them. When we are in trouble we go to our pir and ask him to pray. For example, if the child is sick, the pir prays. Besides giving gifts when visiting a pir, his disciples also gave him presents when he visited them.

- [Notes on a trip to Kahmard and Saighan] The Akhundzâda from Qarabâgh came to Saighan [a valley in Bamian district] and picked up his money. They gave him 600 afghanis from the village [I was told by someone in the truck]. Altogether there were about sixty to seventy households, so they gave about ten afghanis apiece. He got more money from other places, they said.

- [Teacher from Bamian] The pir of Paghman comes to Tagaw [Bamian] once every year. He never asks for money, but his *mur?d* always give liberally to him.

The actual amount to be given to a pir was never stipulated. People distinguished the required payments of *zak?t* (by Sunnis) or *khums* (by Shica) from the gifts they made to their pirs.

- [Teacher in Bamian] The people don't pay *zak?t* [alms] or *khums* [one fifth of the profits assessed among the Shica] to their pirs. They just give whatever they want to.

Gifts of a daughter and sacrifices to a pir are mentioned by Einzmann:

As for the gifts themselves, it is said to this very day that for Allah's help in a particular crisis or as an expression of highest reverence towards a holy man, one made a gift of one's own daughter, in addition to material assets. The holy man collects thereby the sole right to dispose of the girl; he either married her himself or gave her to one of his supporters as a wife. ... Worship and devotion towards a leader, and the other members of the Kayhan family are said to show extreme forms. The leader is said to have had the *ius primae noctis*; defloration gives the girl *barakat*; there is said to have been mass slaughter of cattle so that the blood could clean the path for the saint, and his support could be demonstrated, and so on. ... Another way of showing one's deep reverence is unpaid labour on the landed

property of the holy man, which tends to be of considerable size not least . . . [86]

Of course the deference given to a pir could give opportunity for exploitation; not everything a pir did was necessarily approved.

- [A Sunni official from Kabul working in a provincial district] There is a pir in Kabul who wanted two brides for his son. He went to Paghman and talked with several people and he heard of a man who had a daughter who was pretty and he asked if he could have her. The man agreed. The pir also talked to another man, saying that he had heard that he had a pretty daughter, and the man said, "Yes", and agreed to give her away [in marriage]. The pir put the two girls on his horse and took them home to his son. There was no wedding, no sweets [shirini, formally given to seal the marriage agreement], no mullah, no nothing. He did that only recently. It was only two years ago [i.e. in circa 1965].

Shrines.

Shrines -- places venerated as locations of special sacred power, where healing or deliverance might be obtained -- could be various objects: the remains of a martyr in war, as we have seen[87]; the grave of a great conqueror, such as Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni [88]; places where pirs had performed miracles[89]; and sacred relics, such as Muhammad's "blessed cloak" (firqa e mubarak) in Kandahar, and his "blessed hair" (muy e mubarak) in Jalalabad, both of which received stipends from the government.

SHRINES AS WALIS. But most shrines were the tombs of deceased saints, persons reputed to have been walis. Pirs, individuals said to be walis in their lifetime, were venerated as walis after their deaths.[90] Their graves became objects of veneration and pilgrimage.

- [A Shica elder in Shibar] Sayyed Shahid did "pir work" for his murîd. He had murîd in Sheikh Ali and all around in neighboring areas. He made charms both for good and bad purposes and now his grave is a shrine. He was a Shica and was followed by Shicas.[91] The connection between sacred figures of the past and those of the present was expressed by a retired official from Ghazni (courtesy of J. Dudley Woodberry) describing the shrine where the great Persian poet Sanâ`i is buried. Note that he does not distinguish the living from the dead.

- After Sanâ`i and Bahalul there are their followers [i.e., murid buried in the vicinity], who also are holy. People go to their graves seeking help and they do get help. Even up to the present there are fairly holy men who have followed these walis. They follow their ritual procedures and ways of worshipping very strictly. People admire Sanâ`i because he was a Muslim the way one should be... He was a real man of God, living for the next world, not this one.[92]

This shift from the topic of living pirs to shrines was made by the educated woman who went to a shrine to weep, mentioned above: "Women are dependent on pirs ... Once during a time of difficulty, I went to the shrine of Shah Shahid to cry. ..." The connection

between living and dead pirs was explicit in some Sufi teachings. Algar says that an adept might have received instruction and initiation from a deceased shaykh because "after death and separation from the corporeal being, the ruhânîya [the shaykh in the tomb] will be able to operate more freely, 'by God's leave', and to dispense initiation in certain cases ...".[93] Louis Dupree describes a situation in which a deceased saint in Aq Kupruk continued to serve his community.

Khoja Boland, a saintly soldier in life, always warns Aq Kupruk when danger approaches by firing his rifle. When a cholera epidemic occurred in northern Afghanistan in 1965, the people of Aq Kupruk held a ritual feast (khayrat) to ward off the evil spirits causing the disease.... The mullahs at the feast asked God to keep the cholera away: only four people died when the epidemic reached Aq Kupruk, and many local residents swore on the Koran that they heard Khoja Boland fire his rifle in the early afternoon before the first death.[94]

SHRINES AND THEIR RELATIVES. The sense of continuity between the dead and the living was perpetuated by the descendants who took responsibility for care of a pir's tomb.[95]

- [Mir Hasan] Sayyeds can be in charge of the shrine of their forefathers, and people who come there to worship and to get dirt for healing will undoubtedly, if they believe in this, give something, perhaps an offering, to the Sayyeds.

In such a case a shrine can become a source of income for the descendants. The interest of descendants in the tomb of an ancestor may have contributed to the rise of hagiographic literature about the powers of deceased saints.[96] The pirs of the past are described by their successors as the walis of their time,[97] claims that are substantiated by accounts of their miraculous feats.[98] The right of a pir's descendants to receive gifts on behalf of the shrine was formally recognized by the government of Afghanistan in 1969, when a special commission drew up The Charter of the Awqaf Administration. Previous to that time (says Louis Dupree)

all the shrines functioned under the caretakership of either a family and/or brotherhood, some of which had ferman (royal decrees) dating from Moghul times.... The ferman usually permitted the caretakers to operate the shrines and exempted all revenue ... from taxation.[99]

Of course the importance of a shrine as an object of veneration was the claim that it could be the source of curing or deliverance. [100]

- [Sheikh Gholam Ali] There is a shrine at my mother's grandfather's grave. At the shrine there is a tree and there is water dripping down from it. People take it for medicine. It is called the Shrine of Sayyed i Sâjedar. My mother's cousin, who has delivered some women from fairies, is the grandson of that Sayyed and he used to use the name of this shrine to cast out the spells on the women.

"By the authority of the Sayyed i Sâjedar," he would say.

- [A retired official from a Ghazni; courtesy of J. Dudley Woodberry] In the old days Sayyeds in my village would write holy

things on white stones around the grave [of an eminent pir]. They wrote these on charms and gave them to people bitten by wild dogs, and they would recover. Otherwise, it is believed that the [infected] person would have puppies come up inside his wind pipe and kill him. The man in charge of the shrine is called "'Abdal." People who go there first kiss the grave of the real pir and then the hand of 'Abdal, who used to be his servant.[101]

IV. A Hierarchy of Power

The empirical problems of the human condition coupled with the recognition that certain individuals had means of influencing unseen forces constituted a categorically recognized "reality" that established a hierarchical system of authority and influence. The categorically recognized unfortunate were dependent on categorically recognized authorities such as the ulama and pirs, who putatively had the means to control, or at least influence, the non-empirical entities and forces that created unfortunate conditions. In "a world of means" whoever had methods that worked had cultural capital.

But in practice there were two grounds of superiority, knowledge and sacredness, each of them originating in the earliest period of Islam. With respect to knowledge, a series of superior figures gave instruction to inferior individuals whose obligation was to regard them with deference and respect. God (the source of all knowledge) revealed sacred information to Muhammad who communicated it to his umma. This relationship established the grounds on which the scholars of religious knowledge (fuqah?) within the umma became the sources of knowledge (ilm) for the unlearned. The ulama, scholars of ilm, were sources of knowledge to the unlearned [c?mm], just as in educational contexts mowlaw?s were sources of knowledge for their t?libs. God was to Muhammad as Muhammad was to the umma, as the faqih and the ulama were to the unlearned, as mowlawis were to their talibs. And a dependent spirit and respectful decorum were required of those who were inferior in the relationship.

The other ground of authority, sacredness, was acquired through descent from a sacred ancestor or through mystical experience, usually achieved through the tutelage of a qualified master. The Shica claimed that sacredness passed through the family of Ali, who were biologically descendant from Muhammad, but also passed in the form of certain esoteric secrets from him to Ali and the Imams, the sacredness of the main line passing in a lesser degree to all Sayyeds.[102] Sunni authorities claimed sacredness also, but on the basis of special ties of training and initiation in the Sufi orders, which claimed authority going back to Muhammad. As one author put it, Muhammad was "not only the recipient of revelation and the expositor of the divine message but also -- for the Sufi -- the first link in the initiatic chain...."[103] Sacredness, in any case, trumped knowledge. "An âlem is someone you honor," but "...a pir is someone you fear." "The importance of the pir's pleasure with me is that the pir has been given by God"; "his mur?d get blessing too if they treat him well"; "through the pir their troubles [in the grave] will

be eased”; the great pirs “have been authorized to write charms that forgive sins”; in the name of the dead pir “he used the name of the shrine to cast out the spells.” “Every Muslim must have a pir.” Even in death a true pir, a wali, still “had power” and so his grave could be a source of protection and healing. Commonly, the preeminent religious authorities claimed not only to be learned but to have sacred power. The great Sunni authorities, the “great pirs,” for instance, joined initiation in a Sufi order (even several orders) with extensive study of ilm, thus combining in themselves both grounds of authority. In them “the mowlaw?-t?lib relationship was complemented by the pir-mur?d relationship.” [104]

Such were the relations among those who claimed authority in the set of practices we have called the culture of efficacy, but the hierarchical system entered into the social world of ordinary people as well. The categorically recognized elements of a culture of efficacy, deployed in the habitus of ordinary social life, established the grounds for a hierarchy of authority and respect that permeated all of social life. As Nancy Tapper (1990:238) expressed it with regard to a society in southwestern Turkey, respect was “of key importance in the ordering of all social relations.... [R]espect for God should guide the actions and belief of all Muslims” and respect for authority earned “religious merit (sevab), God’s blessing and reward for piety and meritorious action...” This kind of relation, respect that was repaid in the form of religious merit, was “derived by analogy from the respect due from man to God...” “[B]uttressed by a comprehensive social etiquette and complex symbolic idiom,” the obligation of respect created “hierarchies of authority in all areas of social life,” the relation of citizens to the state, young to old, women to men, “the ill-informed” to the educated.

Indeed, in the popular imagination the relation of superiority/inferiority entailed not only respect for those who were imputed with authority but even fear. Authorities who “had power” could be the source of misfortune as well as good, for magic could be used “like a gun” and those who were sacred had all the more ability to inflict harm as well as to do good.[105] Shica and Sunni alike expressed the fear that sacred authorities could “pray against” them; they could cause people “to die or become sick, or their crops to fail.” Learning and sacredness could thus be turned into not only influence but power and domination.[106]

This system of authority and deference was effected through the ordinary practices of everyday life. It was evoked in material settings such as the architecture of the mosque and the shrine; it was evoked in the call to prayer, in the Friday sermon followed by collective prayers; it was evoked in the pilgrimages of individuals and groups to shrines, in the appeals of individuals for charms and blessings, in the personal services granted by ulama or pirs, in the payments of cash and goods to those who made charms and gave advice, in the gifts presented to pirs; evoked in the rags worn by malangs and faqirs, the fine turbans and wool cloaks of pirs, the black turbans of Sayyeds – these and many other features of ordinary

social life in Afghanistan constituted what Foucault called a “technology of representation.” Cultural forms of many sorts objectified a system of submission and dominance that was nevertheless “conceal[ed] ... beneath the gentle force of nature.”[107] The “pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense”[108] imprinted this hierarchy in “deep-rooted linguistic and muscular patterns of behaviour”[109]; established “by the chains of their own ideas,” whose adhesive strength was “all the stronger in that we do not know of what it is made and we believe it to be our own work ...”[110]

It is tempting to see this hierarchy as a veiled mechanism of class domination. But in fact it cuts across class. One’s place in the hierarchy is always relative to others. With respect to these grounds of authority even a sovereign could be inferior to a notable religious personage: there was a day when he, like everyone else, would kneel when a hadith was recited by a suitably credentialed scholar. So the mechanisms of influence based on the set of categories and practices we have called the culture of efficacy could become means of domination only if they were linked with other mechanisms of power. This is why, of course, some rulers, notably Abdul Rahman, claimed the mantle of religious authority to legitimize their regimes. [111]

V. A Pattern in Afghanistan and the Wider Region

By outlining a culture of efficacy as I found it in Afghanistan in the 1960s I have suggested that a similar complex of practices and a similar moral imagination is still vital among the peoples of Greater Central Asia. In fact, this is a modest claim, for it would not be difficult to show that such practices have informed and animated the lives of people in various parts of Greater Central Asia for many generations -- as the quotations above from Elphinstone, Jewett, and Einzmann indicate. Many more observers could have been cited for that purpose, but since I began with the practice of shrine veneration in recent times, to remind ourselves that that practice was already well established much earlier, I conclude with a description of the moral geography of Sind that could easily apply to places in Greater Central Asia today.

By the end of the eighteenth century, it had become virtually impossible to travel more than a few miles in Sind without coming across the shrine of one saint or another. ... Sufi saints ...[were] the very embodiment of the Islamic message, ... [Local tribes accepted] the need for others to intercede on their behalf. ... Their shrines became symbolic outposts of Muslim culture and Islamic spiritual authority. Their nearness to God enabled pirs to intercede with Him on behalf of others. As they had direct access to God’s blessing and were in charge of seeing that the world was maintained in its proper order, followers appealed to them when things went wrong. ...[112]

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[1] I acknowledge with gratitude the helpful comments of Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek on this article.

[2] Subtelny 1989: 595, 597, 599, 601, 602.

[3] Centlivres 1988 discusses the cult of martyrs in the Soviet-Afghan war.

[4] Griffin 2003: 352.

[5] Griffin 2003: 277.

[6] Ibn Taymiya strongly opposed the veneration of shrines – but almost immediately after his death his tomb became a shrine. Shah Waliullah of Delhi "... was against the custom of worship at saints' tombs and other idolatrous practices" (Olesen 1995:249). Iqbal Ali Shah (1928:99) says of the practice in Afghanistan in early twentieth century, "... in the face of strong denunciation by the priestly class, the faith in the supernatural power of the saints' graves remains unshaken and men and women alike cling freely to it."

[7] Subtelny 1989.

[8] Nancy Tapper (1990:237) says of the situation in Turkey in the 1990s that "the religious and political establishment, and indeed virtually all men, scorn shrine visits and consider that faith in the power of the saints is unnecessary and inappropriate." Shrine veneration is nevertheless practiced by "traditional" women there.

[9] Nancy Tapper (1990: 236-7) treats the veneration of shrines in southwestern Turkey as an activity that "organize[s]" many sorts of associated activities.

[10] The term used here was j?d?, a topic I discuss below.

[11] Attewell 2003 has a discussion of Islamic medicine in his historical context. Csordas, 2002, has a more general discussion of

healing devices as means of coping.

[12] Amossy 2002.

[13] Kaplan (2003) accepts Mouffe's contention (1992:376) that because "...each person articulates an ensemble of contingent "subject positions" that correspond to the multiple, historically specific network of power relations and diverse discourses in which a citizen is immersed." no general theory is possible.

[14] My wording follows Comaroff and Comaroff (2001: 152-3), and Schirato and Webb 2003.

[15] Barth 1993: 286 ff.; Wikan 1993.

[16] Bourdieu 1990:52.

[17] Bourdieu 1990:54.

[18] Kapferer 1988: 79-80; Bourdieu 1977: 167. This discussion could be rephrased in Gramscian terms, as a kind of hegemonic system: "the whole lived social process [that is] practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values." In the words of Raymond Williams a hegemony saturates "the whole process of living ... the whole substance of identities and relationships to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense." Hegemony "... thus constitutes a sense of reality ..., a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives" (Williams 1994:597-598). Williams also notes that there are multiple hegemonies in a society and some of them can be "counter-hegemonic."

[19] Bourdieu 1977: 164.

[20] Bourdieu 1990: 66.

[21] The wording is from Chopra, 2003.

[22] Angenot 2002.

[23] Bourdieu 2001; Verdery 1990; Sider 1994.

[24] Sarfati 2002.

[25] Foucault 1978: 86: "[P]ower is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms."

[26] Bourdieu 1977: 168.

[27] Bourdieu 1977: 165, 169.

[28] In Bourdieu's mind this is an objectification of what is otherwise not objective; for him the systematic relations were constituted in the analytical categories of the outsider but in the memories of events piled one upon another: "To give a complete account of the slightest rite, to rescue it completely from the absurdity of an unmotivated sequence of unmotivated acts and symbols, one would thus have to reinsert each of the acts and symbols which it bring into play into the system of differences which determines it most directly, and eventually into the whole mythico-ritual system; and also, simultaneously, into the syntagmatic sequence which defines it in its singularity which, as the intersection of all the sets of differences ... limits the arbitrariness of its own elements" (Bourdieu 1990: 7-8).

[29] A brief note on the contexts and circumstances of the statements quoted here. In the twenty-one months between the fall of 1966 to the summer of 1968 I was doing field work in Afghanistan, mainly in the Bamian valley. The quotations here come from notes taken from conversations in four types of social settings:

(1) In Kabul, with friends and visitors, most of whom spoke English, who helped me better understand things I was hearing in my field trips to Bamian. The most notable of these was the person identified as "Sheikh Gholam Ali," a highly educated man from a mixed Shica - Sunni town in the west, who was employed in a government office. Although Shica himself, and in fact a Sayyed on his mother's side, he claimed to understand Sunnism well, having studied religion in government schools and spent several years in dormitories with Sunnis; he was about to marry a Sunni woman. As a young man, because he was able to read, he made use of the books of a deceased Sayyed uncle to write charms, mostly for women in distress. By the time I knew him he was no longer much of a believer. He was liberal with information on his own experiences and practices at earlier times, providing detail unmatched by any other source.

(2) In Shibar (eastern Bamian) where I spent most of my first year of field work, in the homes of many gracious Hazaras. The most helpful was "Mir Hasan", who hosted my initial stays in Shibar and who introduced me to many other Hazaras who took me into their homes as well. "Mir Hasan" was a mir, a representative of his Ismacili community to the government, and because of his long experience as a leader in the community and his wide contacts in the region he was a treasure trove of stories about local affairs. His time, hospitality, and loyal friendship were much appreciated. After several months of traveling and living among Ismacilis, I established a pied-à-terre in a "Twelver" (Athn?csharia) Shica community in order to meet more members of that sect. All conversations in Shibar were in Dari.

(3) In the market town of Bamian with a young graduate of Kabul Teacher's College. I paid him to help collect information on the town of Tolwara, a Sunni community in the Markaz of Bamian. In Dari.

(4) On buses or trucks or in a tea houses where many kinds of people, friendly fellow travelers, were generous with information on their life and affairs. After spending a year walking around Shibar and Kalu, in the eastern highlands of Bamian, I began traveling more widely in Bamian, usually on whatever means of transport was available, staying in various tea houses (otals, ch?ykh?nas) in the area. Most of the time was spent in the Markaz of Bamian but I also visited communities in tributary valleys such as Foladi, Sayghan, and K?mard. Although I stayed in some places several times I never stayed in any one place more than two weeks at a time. In the Markaz most of my fellow travelers had come there to deal with the provincial government, to resolve a dispute or fulfill a formally of some kind. Conversations with them were entirely informal,

conducted in Dari; I never took notes in their presence (although I did use mnemonic devices to aid recall) but wrote up my recollections shortly afterwards. In these notes I did my best to reproduce what I heard and saw, word for word when I could manage it, in paraphrase when I could not. The conversations I wrote up took place in many settings: a host's guest room, on a bus or truck, in a hotel while sitting around a samovar during the day, in a hotel dormitory in the evening.

The field work, that is, was conducted well before jargonized names for what I did had been invented ("doing participant observation", "snowball sampling," etc.) and before funding sources demanded formal consent from one's sources. As it happens, no one has defended this informal, unstructured, uncontrolled "method" of gathering information with more élan than the noted historian, Jules Michelet, professor of the École Normale at the Sorbonne, chief historical curator of the National Archives, the leading professional historian in France in the mid nineteenth century, author of the monumental *History of the French Revolution* (1847-1853). He drew upon his own memory, having lived through the period; but notably for ten years he interviewed people informally outside Paris with the conscious intention of counterbalancing the biases of official documents. He wrote the following about his methods and sources: "When I say oral tradition, I mean national tradition, which remained generally scattered in the mouths of the people, which everybody said and repeated, peasants, townsfolk, old men, women, even children, which you can hear if you enter of an evening into a village tavern; which you may gather if, finding on the road a passer by at rest, you begin to converse with him about the rain, the season, then the high price of victuals, then the times of the Emperor, then the times of the Revolution" (Quoted in Paul Thompson 1988: 22.) I propose to regard the statements of my Afghan associates, friends, and teachers, quoted here, as particular and personal expressions of what Michelet would have called an Afghanistan "national tradition" as it existed in the late 1960s.

[30] Canfield 1976:120.

[31] Sheikh Gholam Ali, who had practiced healing and curing for a time, said that he could distinguish problems created by invisible forces from those that were merely physical: "We know what kind of sickness it is, whether it is supernatural or one that doctors can heal. For example, a person may be frightened in his sleep, and the next morning he cannot talk -- the fairies tell not to tell anyone. It happens to women; I've never seen a man like that."

[32] Encyclopedia of Islam, "Sihir".

[33] Frejos 1963:227; cf. Dollott 1937:237.

[34] Qur'an Sura 2:102.

[35] The evil eye appears elsewhere in communities where resentments are suppressed, the sanctions against open hostility were strong, or the dangers against breaking fellowship were great. Malice, having to be curbed, breaks out as sorcery or the evil eye (Wolf, 1955, 1957; Nadel, 1952; Spooner 1970).

[36] On jinns see Shalinsky 1980, 1986, 1989; Qur'an 15:27; 55:15, 6:131, 32:13, 46:29, 72:14-15, 6:113, 129, 27:17; 34:12.

[37] Naqshe- Haqâni (Abdur Rashid N.D.) says that if a person gets sick on a Sunday night, it is because of a fairy's or jinns shadow. The symptom is that his body will be weak, he will be afraid in sleep, won't talk to people, etc.

[38] A famous shrine in the Bamian Markaz is that of Mir Hashem Deoband. His title literally means "the deo binder". The term could refer to a putative power or to his connection with the Deobandi school in India. The name of that school enshrines a certain ambiguity, for the name of the place where the school was established implies that something about the place or someone buried there has the power to control deos.

[39] Estimates of land size are commonly expressed in terms of the amount of seed that can be profitably be sown on it. A kharwar is 80 ser (Samin and Nielson 1967).

[40] For some reason I failed to bring up the best reason: The main road between Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif had been diverted away from Bamian by the recent construction of the Salang pass. Bamian had formerly lain astride the most trafficked route over the Hindu Kush, but its fortunes steadily declined as the modern Afghan government constructed roads through more direct routes over the Hindu Kush, first through Shikari Gorge then through Salang.

[41] Shipped by truck, salt is generally cheaper now than it used to be; before it was shipped by camel caravan. Because no natural sources exist in the Hazarajat, it has always been highly valued there, and was once used as a medium of exchange and pricing.

[42] Bourdieu 1962: 187 notes that the Kabyles used to say during the Algerian War, "We are now in the fourteenth century", meaning that we are approaching the end of the world. This sentiment was expressed by Sheikh Gholam Ali, who said he had read somewhere that Gabriel told Muhammad that he would come to earth only three more times. "Once when Muhammad dies. Once when he takes all the barakat from the world -- because people will be so bad that God will take His blessing from the world. And the last time will be to take the blessing of the Qur'an from the world. It used to be that when someone swore [falsely or without absolute purity] on the Qur'an they died on the spot, or exploded or something happened to them -- their animals died and so forth. No one dies anymore if they swear on the Qur'an. Everyone does it now. I heard a mullah say -- this was even the other day -- he said he believes Gabriel has already come to take the blessing from the earth. He must have come to take the power from the earth, because he has taken it from the Qur'an..."

[43] This is but one of a number of statements that J. Dudley Woodberry collected in the early 1970s, most of them on what shrines meant to people; it is hoped that more of his work will be published. I hereby express appreciation to him for permission to publish selections from his materials.

[44] The BBC (2005) reports that a certain tacwiz writer in Kabul every day receives orders for tacwizs from about 500 people in Kabul

and 30 from neighboring areas. Most of the orders are from women.

[45] Das 1976: 247.

[46] This viewpoint was echoed in many similar statements of Muslims, the eleventh century Seljuq minister, Nizam ul mulk, for example (Shekhulislami 1986: 231). Brinner (1987:46 47) says, "The karamat of the saints correspond to the mucjizat of the prophets insofar as they imply deviation from the ordinary course of events, but they are not meant to silence opponents. Rather, they are a sign of the grace of God toward the saint through whom they are manifested.... [B]araka [is] a word meaning literally 'blessing,' but connoting divine grace and the power of sanctity, or, as one scholar [Trimingham] has put it, 'virtue as inherent spiritual power.'"

[47] On Sufism in Afghanistan see Wieland-Karimi 1998.

[48] In his discussion of the underlying sociocultural conditions of the notion of "saint" Gellner (1969: 42 43) presents the authority of saints as a construction of the society in such a way as to mask their actual belief. The saints [igurramen] are said to possess baraka, which he translates as "enough" and "plentitude, and above all blessedness manifested amongst other things in prosperity and the power to cause prosperity in others by supernatural means". Gellner, however, takes this teaching to be a mere ideological mask of reality. "The reality of the situation is, however, that the igurramen are in fact selected by the surrounding ordinary tribesmen who use their services ... What appears to be vox Dei is in reality vox populi." (43 44) This treatment of the Berber concept of "saint" reflects little appreciation for an Islamic ontology. See Asad (1986) for a useful critique.

[49] Edwards 1986: 273.

[50] The three bases of Islamic authority are formally recognized by the three Islamic sects, Sunni, Ithnacasharia Shici, and Ismacili Shici, but in different ways, according to the stipulations of their respective dogmatic positions.

[51] Scholars enhanced their reputations by writing books on Islamic subjects. This was a basis pride among the Ismacilis of the accomplishments of their pir, Sayyed Nadir Khan of Kayan.

[Mir Hasan] Our pir is the only religious leader who has written commentaries on the Quran. The leaders of the other sects don't because they can't. Our pir is very intelligent and he is respected for his ability to lead people.

[A Shi`a Hazara from Bamian] The Sayyed has written forty-eight or forty-nine books. They are written in Arabic, I think. I have not read them myself. It is much work to read these books... People study for twenty, twenty-five years on these books... They have memorized some of the verses. Four or five of the books have been published but most are in script. These are very hard books, if you can read them and understand them.

[Mir Hasan] The real growth in Ismacilism in this country has come since the present pir took office. He has written many books and we memorize his poetry. Also, his son has written a lot of

poetry.

[52] The ability to recognize jugglery from true kar?mat was considered important by all sects but for the Shica it was an article of faith that one must know the true Imam of one's time to be saved (Encyclopedia of Islam, "Sihr").

[53] A recent study of jinns and related spirits and the harm they do and the methods of curing or controlling them is Farhat (1996). She indicates that in the Makran of Balochistan, Pakistan, the word gwat is used for a certain kind of evil spirit (distinguished locally from jinns) and the healer of these spirits is called gwat-i-mat.

[54] See Encyclopedia of Islam, "Sihr", "F?l".

[55] Sergent 1969; On Sayyeds as "safeguards" see Hodgson 1974:I, 259 ff. On the acceptance of the claims of the Alids by both Shicites and Sunnis see Muttahedeh 1980: 7 ff.

[56] Enayat 1982:193, Encyclopaedia of Islam "Imam"; Barthol'd 1968 [1900] :375).

[57] For a discussion of noble descent see EI, "Sharif". For a discussion of closeness to God see Eickelman (1974, 1976). For a discussion of genealogy (nasab) and earned repute by upright behavior (hasab) see Mottahedeh (1980:98).

[58] Edwards (1986: 278) has noted that "there are many cases of sayyids and other members of religious lineages who choose to follow Sufi pirs and become their khalifas [assistants]. In this way, the status of biological descent [in a sacred line] is combined with that of spiritual descent [certified membership in a line of sufi masters], giving the individual and his family the special status of being not only of sacred ancestry but also a pir khana, literally, a "house of masters". It also happens that non hereditary pirs institutionalize the position of khalifa within their own families and thereby graft the lines of spiritual and biological descent together."

[59] The Qadiris were led by Naqib Saheb family, descendants of the founder of the Qadiri sufi order, Abdul Qadir Gailani, who were known as naqib ul-ashraf. Sayyed Hasan Effendi, the brother of the acting Naqib in Baghdad at the time, came to Afghanistan after a 1904 interview with Amir Habibullah, who provided him a number of amenities (Olesen 1995:97; Edwards 2002:255). He died in 1943. After the early demise of the first son, the second, Sayyed Ahmad Gailani, became pir of the Qadiri order in the 1960s. After 1979 he took the leadership of the Mahaz-i Milli-ye Islami resistance party in the anti-communist movement. The leading family of the Naqshbandis were the Mujaddidis, known as "Hazrats," who have headed the order since early in the twentieth century (Olesen 1995: 44 ff., 162-3; Lizzio 2003). Gr?nhaug (1978:99) describes the Sufi circles of Herat in the 1960s as relatively small and transitory: "Sufism as an inventory of idioms and Sufi practice is a widely spread tradition, a symbolic language known by millions. But at the level of active groups, tariqat units in Herat are small and short lived." Earlier in the century Sufi circles were apparently more commonplace.

[60] Extensive treatments of Sufism are in Rahman (1979: esp101

103); Hodgson (1974 II: esp 228 ff.); Schleifer (1983); Schimmel (1975); Gibb (1953). Relevant entries in the Encyclopedia of Islam are "Dhikr", "Hallajj," "Hizb," "Kahin," "Tar?ka" "Tassawuf," "wird". Lings (1993) introduces novel perspectives; a distinctive and richly nuanced treatment of the recitations of the names of God in Muslim worship is Padwick (1961); Enayat (1979:18) provides a Shicite view. On sufi practice in Afghanistan see Einzman (1977); Gr?nhaug (1978); Utas (1980, 1988), Edwards (1986); Olesen (1995). Dupree (1976:18) says that "To be called 'Sufi Sahib a man must read the Koran 113 times and maintain 40 days of silence."

Aq Kupruk had one Sufi Sahib, he said.

[61] Metcalf 1982:79.

[62] Rahman 1979:137.

[63] Quoted in Gibb 1953: 151.

[64] Algar 1976: 127.

[65] See Metcalf (1982: 29, note) on other terms in use in eighteenth century Muslim society in South Asia. Wilbur (1962:68) uses the term murshid (also rahnamâ, or "guide") to refer to a "spiritual advisor" who "has no official status but advises on spiritual problems at the family level"; Einzman (1977:31; see also 23 ff.) speaks of lesser known pirs as murshids, who lead local sufi circles, write amulets and possibly mediate disputes.

[66] Roy 1990, Olesen 1995. The most familiar examples of "maraboutic Sufism" in Afghanistan was the relation of the eastern and southern Pushtun tribes, some of them pastoral nomads, to the leaders of the Qadiria and Naqshbandi orders. They paid occasional visits and regular gifts to their pirs, which may have been an important basis for the influence of several notable pirs in the past, such as Hadda-i Sahib and Mullah Mushk-i Alam in the nineteenth century (Olesen 1995:81 ff.; Edwards 1996). The Hazrat Saheb of Kabul, a Mujaddidi, has headed the Naqshbandi tribes since early in this century, and the a member of the "Naqib Saheb" lineage has led the Qâdirî tribes since the was invited to come to Afghanistan by Amir Habibullah in 1904 (Olesen 1995: 44 ff., 162-3).

[67] I here treat the "maraboutic" form of the pir-murid relationship as the common phenomenon among all three of the Afghan Islamic sects rather than the form emphasized in the orientalist literature. My opinion is that treating the pirship as merely an aspect of sufism tends to mask its general importance in popular practice. This was, I think, Wilbur's error (1962: 72) when he overlooked the importance of pirs in the lives of ordinary people. He mistakenly regarded the sufism practiced in Afghanistan as unusual: "While the dervish orders have largely died out in Islam [!], at least they survive in Afghanistan the Chishtis, followers of the murshid Mu`in Chishti ..., the Naqshbandis, who are concentrated in Mazar i Sharif, and the Jilanis."

[68] Edwards (1986:277, cf. 279) describes faqirs as people who "generally live off alms and, if they reside in any single place, it is usually in the precincts of a saint's tomb".

[69] In fact, however, the malang of Bulola was not generally

respected.

[From my notes on a bus trip to Bamian] The Malawi got on the bus and was given the preferential seat. The malang of Bulola came up to the window and asked for his khayr ["grace", i.e. a gift]. The malawi stared at him, did not speak to him. Everyone treated the malawi with deference and the malang with contempt. But many people did give the malang his khayr, although they showed no fear or respect for him.

[70] Of the situation early in the nineteenth century Elphinstone (1972 [1839] vol. 1:288) says the following about irregular sacred figures:

Besides the regular clergy ['ulama'], there are many persons who are revered for their own sanctity, or that of their ancestors. Among the latter, the most famous are the syuds [sayyeds], or descendants of Muhammed; and the former are called by the different names of Derweshes (Dervishes), Fakeer, etc., either arbitrarily, or from some little difference in their observances; one set called Kulunder [Calenders, Qalandârs], for instance, are remarkable for going almost naked; others wander from place to place, and visit all resorts of pilgrims; while some live abstemious and religious lives in the midst of towns, and some retire to practice their austerities in solitary places.

[71] Rahman (1979:145 ff.), for instance.

[72] Bell 1948: 304.

[73] The basic sense of the usage was for a person who had acquired knowledge. When Islamists trained in Iran began to come into Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s they were also known as "sheikh." Their influence would be of a very different sort: see Harpviken 1996.

[74] The word qasida is defined by Steingass (1975) as "a poem, or elegy, being a kind of longer ghazal which seldom exceeds thirteen but not more than eighteen Distiches: an ode..." See Shah 1928: 87 89; Dolot 1937: 240, 290 291. On shamanistic practices see Baldauf 1989; Centlivres, Centlivres, and Slobin 1971; Centlivres and Centrlivres-Demont 1988. On the rituals of controlling jinns in the Muslim world generally see MacDonald 1965:153 ff. Hachin and Kohzad (1953) recount a story about Ali performing a ritual like qasida pukhta kardan.

[75] This was presumably the same person described above as giving up his rank as a general and becoming a faqir.

[76] Sahlins 1981.

[77] Sultan Ali Kishtmand, a Hazara from Bamian, became active in the Parchami communist faction. He held many posts in government in the Communist period, eventually serving as Prime Minister. He resigned from the party in 1991 (Rubin 1995a:152).

[78] As is well known, people who otherwise would avoid some devices of efficacy – such as prayer at a shrine, for instance – can be driven to making use of them in extremis. Elizabeth Fernia (1970) reports that in desperation, because of the urgent illness of her daughter, she accepted and used an amulet.

- [79] The eighteenth century Sunni scholar in Delhi, India, Shah Wali Ullah, "exemplified the ideal pattern of religious leader being both saint and âlim. As âlim he produced a prodigious body of scholarship But as his title Waliyu'llah ("the friend of God") reveals, he was also a saint... the qutbu'l aqtab, the Saint of the age, the pivot around whom the world revolves..." (Metcalf 1982:42). Thus, in Sunni practice the institutionalized distinction between âlim and sufi has in real individuals been substantially blurred (Metcalf 1982:32; cf. Mottahedeh 1980: 148).
- [80] Elphinstone 1972 [1839]: Vol I, 289. Rahman (1979: 159) says that "In most cases the fact is that the disciples tended to father miracles on the Shaykhs who disowned them" (cf. Canfield 1991).
- [81] See Olesen 1995 for good discussions of the great pir families among the Sunnis, such as the Mujdaddidis and the Gailanis.
- [82] On the exercise of influence and power in connection with Sufism see Wieland-Karimi 1999.
- [83] The pir of the Ismacilis, however, banned the writing of charms.
- [84] Elphinstone 1972 [1839]: vol. 1 p. 288.
- [85] Bell 1948: 22. Jewett also says (Bell 1948: 304) that the Amir [Habibullah] had "a special sarai which he has set aside for their [sacred persons'] care ... the majority of these beggars are faqirs or holy men."
- [86] Einzman, 1977: 26-7, translation from German by courtesy of Hugh Beattie.
- [87] The sacred qualities attributed to persons unjustly killed were implied in a statement made by a Shi'a elder from Shibar. "Bobby Kennedy is now a faqir because he was martyred". Einzmann (1977: 294) notes that a shah?d [martyr] can be a source of blessing.
- [88] Shah (1928:97) says that dust from Mahmud's grave was sold by weight for a good price in Shrinagar.
- [89] Einzmann 1977: 296.
- [90] Both Shah and Einzmann say that the spirits of walis confer among themselves every night. Shah (1928: 97) says "Saint's souls flow up [from the tomb] during the night and return during the day." Einzmann (1977: 300) says that on Wednesdays "all saints [i.e. walis] gather at all ziyarats [shrines] at the same time"
- [91] Elphinstone says that the graves of notable religious figures could become sanctuaries from revenge in the blood feud: "These ascetics have been esteemed in Afghaunistaun in all ages, and half the histories of that country are filled with the legends of the numerous male and female saints whom it has produced. The places where such devotees are interred, or which have been distinguished by remarkable actions of their lives, are still considered as sacred, and each of the most celebrated is a safe asylum even from revenge for blood. The reverence in which these sanctuaries are held is shown by the practice of the Eusofzyes, the most lawless of all the tribes, where a clan going out to battle, places its women in one of them, and relies on their security in case of a defeat" (Elphinstone 1972: vol 1, 288).
- [92] Einzmann (1977:294 ff.) distinguishes between "international"

saints (the great heroes of Islam venerated by all Muslims everywhere) and "regional" saints who are known and venerated by the local inhabitants of a region; all of the saints he discusses are deceased. Sanâ`i, referred to above, would be an "international" saint, for he is recognized as the first great sufi poet of the Persian language. His tomb is in Ghazni. "Bahlul," referred to above, was Baha al Din Naqshband, the fourteenth century Bukharan who is credited with founding the Naqshbandi Sufi order.

[93] Algar 1976:131; cf. DeWeese 1993.

[94] Dupree 1970: 350.

[95] The most notable cases of this were in the establishment of waqfs (McChesney 1991, 1996), but even if there was no endowment a descendent might take responsibility for an ancestor's tomb. McChesney's is the most extensive work on shrines in Greater Central Asia.

[96] Cf, e.g., Deweese (1988, 1993); Ernst (1992); Gross (1990); Keddi (1972); Mazzaoui (1972) and other works cited here.

[97] To keep my discussion clear I have used the term wali for the ideal concept and pir for a living person. As should be evident, the hagiographic literature makes no such distinction, as its purpose is to show how a certain pir manifested the decorum and powers of a wali.

[98] Elphinstone (1972 [1839] vol I: 289) wrote, "I have in my possession a book of miracles wrought by the famous saint of Chumkunnee, the spiritual director of Ahmed Shauh. It contains accounts of many miracles performed within these fifty years. It was given me by the son of the saint, and as it was written in his lifetime and attested by many of his scholars it is difficult to acquit him of fraud or falsehood.

[99] L. Dupree (1976:4); see McChesney (1991) on Mazar-i Sharif; Einzmann (1977:299) on shrines in Kabul.

[100] The ritual practices at shrines and the objects left at shrines are described by Einzmann (1977:299, 301, 302). Dupree (1976:1) mentions the kinds of cures that are sought at shrines. Utas (1980: 61) points out that the complaints for which relief is sought from living saints and from shrines (i.e., deceased saints) are similar.

[101] Einzmann (1977:295) says that even "enlightened" individuals resorted to shrines "for the help of a saint." But Einzmann (1977:303) also suggests that, at least in the early 1970s the veneration of shrines had declined.

[102] On the hierarchy of sayyeds among Shi`a and Sunnis in Afghanistan, besides other works cited here, see also Snoy (1972:175); on Ismaili teaching see Nanji 1978.

[103] Algar (1976: 127). Gibb (1953: 154) points out that Sufis and the Shica share the claim that an original secret knowledge was passed from Muhammad to Ali and became the basis for the chain of succession that followed.

[104] Olesen 1995:50

[105] In response to Franz Rosenthal's assertion that "ilm is Islam" Brinkley Messick (1994: 154) makes the remark that knowledge

established “exclusive and divisive hierarchical implications in a society where knowledge was neither universally accessible nor evenly distributed,” referring to knowledge of authoritative texts, the Quran and the Hadith. In our case we have noted that in addition to knowledge of these subjects the ?lem is trained in sihr, magic.

Knowledge of sihr enhanced the superior status of the ?lem even more, owing to the supposition that he had learned how to influence the unseen forces that affect human affairs. On modern practice of Islamic education see Eickelman (1985). On the authority of Islamic knowledge generally see Encyclopedia of Islam, “Ilm”, “fiqh”, “ilm-i kal?m,” ‘sharica”. On knowledge of Quran and Hadith in social practice in medieval times see Barthol'd (1968 [1900]: esp. 373, 232); Mottahedeh (1980: esp 141-2).

[106] Wieland-Karimi 1999.

[107] Foucault 1977: 104, 106.

[108] Bourdieu 1990:68.

[109] Bourdieu 1990:69

[110] The wording is from J. M. Servan, quoted in Foucault (1977:102-3). Servan is contrasting the devices of the despot with those of the politician: “A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas...” See also Giddens 1977 chapter 3.

[111] Halbach (1989) refers to the “muridism” surrounding sufi orders as the source of uprisings against the czars as well as the Soviets. He cites as examples not only the rebellions in North Caucasus and Turkistan, and by Volga Tatars in the nineteenth century, but also a 1986 uprising in Tajikistan. He links these uprisings to sufi circles in which students [murids] oriented toward mystical Islam swear to follow their teacher and master [murshid], “who treats them in an almost totalitarian manner.” No doubt many such movements could have been organized by sufi orders but in so far as they enjoyed the support of the wider community, most of whom were not Sufis, the conceptions of authority would have had a broader relevance, such as that generated by the set of relations we have called a culture of efficacy.

[112] Ansari (1992: 22-23). Compare this statement, for instance, with comment by Nancy Tapper (1990: 237) that a place in southwestern Turkey was “felt to be permeated with a sanctity that derived from the shrines (ziyaret) of the many saints (evliya) who were buried there. ...”