

Livelihood, Empowerment and Conflict Resolution in
the Lives of Indigenous Women in Uzbekistan

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines women's and their household members' livelihood constraints and the choices they make, diversification in response to land tenure changes in rural development, and resilience mechanisms of the newly emerging livelihood activities of *dehqons*,¹ farmers, and traders in rural areas in Tashkent *oblast*² in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Women's coping, preserving, and accumulating resilience demonstrate their capabilities for transforming and mobilizing assets to develop livelihood activities and meet basic needs; and the ways in which people are able to diversify livelihood activities by intensifying current livelihood activities and expanding them through social networks with the state and markets.

The livelihood analysis is complemented by the examination of two types of women's savings networks: (1) indigenous³ saving networks such as *gap*, and (2) savings networks that are local and emerged during Soviet times such as *chernaya kassa*. These savings networks serve as a livelihood resilience mechanism for social and economic empowerment in the Tashkent region. These networks represent a collective movement and action against the economic dependency of women on men and the state micro-loan bank system to which women at the grassroots level do not resort to. These social and economic networks that do not require external donor

¹ *Dehqon* [Uz.] is a peasant. Peasants lease the land from farmers.

² *Oblast* [Russ.] is a province. In Uzbek it is *viloyat*.

³ The UN (2004) defines "Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations as "those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system" (p. 2). I identify indigenous or native peoples who have been historically living in a given region prior to colonization and have their own distinctive ways of living and knowledge systems. In this case, they constitute a majority who were marginalized and oppressed and thus, had a minority status in their own country. In Central Asia, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazaks, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen lived prior to the Russian conquest that began in the 1700s. These peoples have strong links to land, nature, and cosmologies. Their knowledge systems encompass language; culture; beliefs; and social, economic, and political systems.

interventions and function outside the mainstream economic assessment, have been able to empower women for social justice, redistribution of resources, knowledge, voice, and conflict resolution in ways that are vital for community development.

Using in-depth interviews and narrative methodology, this study examines such ceremonies as *mavlud*, *ihson*, Bibi Seshanba (Lady Tuesday) and Mushkul Kushod (Solver of Difficulties), and healing practices, grassroots peacebuilding methods. Many local healers and *otins*⁴ understand the structural roots of inequalities which decrease women's access to resources and consequently their fair distribution and women's choices. These religious leaders use their discursive knowledge, based on Islam, Sufism, shamanism, and animism to challenge and transform women's subordination, abuse, limited property rights, unemployment, domestic violence, and other practices that impinge on women's needs and rights. These female religious leaders, through different ceremonial practices, create space for raising the critical consciousness of women which transforms the social order to remake power relations, identities, and gender ideologies in families and communities.

This research shows how women's approach to community development is built on knowledge, power, and action achieved through (1) livelihood mobilisation and *gap* and *chernaya kassa*; (2) healing; (3) reclaiming sacred space and action; (4) ecological peacebuilding; and (5) agency. This system of community development shows how women's agency can reorganise male dominated gendered space as an alternative to the hierarchical elite-driven Women's Committees and state court systems established in Soviet times. Women's discursive knowledge, inner authority, and agency help households move from poverty to multidimensional empowerment: spiritual, economic, social, cultural, human, financial, ecological, and psychological.

⁴ The *otin* [Uz.] is a religious teacher who teaches Qur'anic classes to girls and women. The *otin* is also a religious leader who holds the ceremony in Muslim female gatherings. There are very many terms for these women. For example, *otin oyi*.

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This thesis came to birth because of the enormous support and guidance of many people. I wish to acknowledge the contributions of my dissertation committee. Dr. Senehi's love for storytelling and peacebuilding helped me to acknowledge that I came to Winnipeg for a right reason. My first class with Dr. Senehi, "Storytelling: Identity, Power and Transformation," which I took in winter 2007 set my methodological framework. As storytelling is part of my culture, I embraced narrative methods in fieldwork. Dr. Senehi has worked extensively with mixed methods of social research and action in North America, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East. Dr. Senehi's research and community outreach activities promote innovative ways of using story-based methods for conflict resolution, peace-making and community building. As my advisor, she encouraged my endeavours to examine women's indigenous conflict resolution methods.

I wish to submit my gratitude to Dr. Marianne Kamp for her enormous input into my dissertation. I admired her book *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Unveiling under Communism*. In my first conversation by telephone with her, I said that I fell in love with her book. I felt that she depicted women's lives so truly as if she was an Uzbek woman. I feel privileged to have her on my committee. Her detailed knowledge of Central Asia – its history, women issues, and current socio-economic developments – helped me to gain insights into nuances. Dr. Kamp's reading of all my draft chapters and comments encouraged me to improve historical aspects and to question the notions of resistance and empowerment.

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This Ph.D. would not have been possible without the support of women in Uzbekistan. I spent hours talking to them and participated in their daily routines. I went to the bazaar to sell herbs at five o'clock in the morning, planted seeds from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. with an afternoon break, attended baking classes, cleaned, and served in life cycle events. They all worked hard but also we had great moments of relaxation with a cup of tea and putting *usma*⁵ on our eyebrows. During our conversations I asked them what they needed and what they expected from me. Women were interested to know what people plant in Canada and how they plant. Some women asked me to bring potato, carrot, or any other seeds from Canada. Some women asked about baking recipes, and information about fashion, clothes, and shoes. In other words, they were looking for knowledge to improve their income-generating activities. I hope one day I can fulfil their expectations and bring this knowledge to Uzbekistan.

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⁵ *Usma* [Uz.] is a local herb that women grow in their gardens, collect, roll in their hands, squeeze to take juice out, and put on their eyebrows to enhance their beauty.

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Finally, I want to submit my gratitude to my family who care about my health, well-being, education, and work. Home is where people think about you. My home is where the soul is “soul at peace,” where I could rest and rely on others in case of hardships, difficulties, sorrow, and grief. I wish to honour my grandmother, my *oye*, by dedicating this dissertation to her. My *oye* said: “I know that people one day will come to you and knock on your door.” Her hope that I will be I be a source of help and support was inspirational for me.

Zulfiya Mumin-Tursun

For Oinisa Muminova

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DEDICATION

I also desire to dedicate this dissertation to Zulfiya opa,⁶ a healer, who used healing power in practice to bring peace to communities and transform interactions and relationships among household members and the community. She was the person who provided therapy to women and men, and calmed them down in situations of epiphanies, calamities, and changes. The healer dealt with issues of patriarchy, unemployment, sickness, cursing, cheating on wives, disputes between spouses, and tensions in cross-cultural relations in ways that were crucial in preserving peace. She presented an alternative force to the oppression of people through her divine power and knowledge of mixed Islamic cosmology and praxis, shamanism, Sufi notions of knowledge transmission, and contemporary knowledge of bio-energy.

Zulfiya opa used to work as a seller in a children's shop, a tailor, an accountant, and a cashier. At the age 48, after a sickness that came from Allah, she became a healer. This change took place when economic hardships started emerging in 1980s, ten years before the former Soviet Union collapsed. It was as though her transformation into a healer was timely, coinciding with a political period when women's roles, identity, and status had been changing with their socio-economic situation. The healer empowered women, especially those who experienced interpersonal and intra-household conflicts in claiming property rights, assisting them in having voice, peace, harmony, and also autonomy within families.

Although Zulfiya opa identified herself as *bezdiplomniy tabib*,⁷ I was astonished at her tremendous intellectual ability to map and analyze conflicts at the family, household, and community levels located in a socio-economic, political, and

⁶ *Opa* [Uz.] is translated as sister and implies a respectful way of addressing a woman who is older than you.

⁷ *Bezdiplomni* [Russ.] *tabib* [Uz.] is an uneducated Islamic healer.

cultural context of gender interplay. I always thought about her as an expert and practitioner who has a Ph.D. in Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies. She amazed me with her ability to discuss sensitive issues with ease and provide multiple avenues for change and hope. I believe that her role was crucial in empowering women and men and easing the tension the person was in. “*Hali vse vpredi. Eshe vse vpredi*”,⁸ she inspired people continuously.

⁸ Both *hali* [Uz.] and *eshe* [Russ.] are translated as “also.” *Vse vpredi* [Russ.] means “everything is in the future.” “*Hali vse vpredi. Eshe vse vpredi*” means everything is in the future. Even though our conversation was in Uzbek, sometimes Zulfiya opa used Russian words or aphorisms.

CHAPTER 1

PATHWAYS TO THIS RESEARCH: SITUATED KNOWLEDGES AND EXPERIENCES

Introduction

My interest in Peace and Conflict Studies has evolved gradually out of my experiences in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. I was born in the 1970s in the midst of Soviet economic reforms where authoritarianism and some form of insecurity and paradoxically stability existed at the same time. The collapse of the Soviet Union posed economic limitations, but also opened enormous opportunities to study abroad and gain western knowledge. Being far from my country enabled me to explore and understand who I am in relation to Peace and Conflict Studies, feminism and development. I will highlight how my childhood and adulthood experiences, preliminary research before coming to Canada, and women's understanding of feminism and empowerment shaped my interest and critical thinking about the complex life of women in Uzbekistan.

Soviet state top-down approaches to the development of impoverished Uzbekistan, five-year plan-economies, slogans to meet cotton quotas fill my memories. Since my early childhood, I watched Soviet and local news about the fulfilment of the five-year economic plan for each republic of the former Soviet Union. I remember the image of Brezhnev who was mumbling the reports at the Congresses of the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union. I could not understand what he was saying, but kept watching this news because my father insisted that my siblings and I should be politically educated. What I do remember is

the glorious images of women from Uzbekistan who were named *udarniks*⁹ for collecting a striking amount of cotton manually.

My childhood and adulthood memories relate to Marxist-Leninist indoctrinated curriculum and reading such books as *Virgin Land* by L.I. Brezhnev. The Soviet era was also a time of severe political repressions. My grandma, Oinisa *oye*,¹⁰ told me that she had a big piece of land which was taken away from her during the 1920s. It was the time when land was taken away from the rural elite to set up collective and state farms. My *oye* shared her moments of grief talking about the repressions in Stalin's time. Her husband and her sister's husband were prosecuted for being politically active. My *oye*'s sister sewed and sold *kurpas* and *ko'rpachas*,¹¹ and cooked and baked to collect money to visit her husband exiled to Russia.

I always felt that my life has two contrasting incompatible paradigms: one based on imposed Soviet literacy and another one based on folk culture, an undervalued literacy of indigenous peoples in Central Asia. When I became a teenager my *oye* asked me to read her a book, *Kobusnoma*¹² (Kaukovus, 1974), which is a compilation of stories that give guidance in life. For example, some articles relate to *dehqonchilik*¹³ and buying and selling in the bazaar, getting rid of enemies, the upbringing of children, dispute and conflict resolution, buying land and a house, selling horses, inviting guests and being a guest, saving property, and other stories. One of my favourite articles that I liked to discuss with *oye* was about trade and purchase-making. The author of the article wrote the following story:

⁹ *Udarnik* [Russ.] is a superproductive worker. The workers who exceed the working norms in cotton production or any other areas of industrial production were called "Udarnik of Communist labour." This was a prestigious and honorary title for workers that the Communist Party granted.

¹⁰ *Oye* [Uz.] is a mother.

¹¹ *Kurpa* [Uz.] is a traditional mattress. *Ko'rpacha* [Uz.] is a traditional quilt.

¹² Kaukovus Kaspuy wrote *Kobusnoma* in the 11th century. The book is an ancient Persian text with stories that came long ago.

¹³ *Dehqon* [Uz.] is a peasant. *Dehqonchilik* is agricultural work done by peasants.

I heard that one man had a significant number of sheep. He had a shepherd who was honest and did not harm anyone. Every day he milked sheep and brought milk to his chief. The owner of the sheep put water into the milk and asked the shepherd to sell this milk. The shepherd advised him: “Hey, *khoja*,¹⁴ do not harm Muslims, otherwise you will harm yourself.” This man did not listen to the shepherd’s advice and continued doing harm. In late spring the shepherd took sheep close to the river and went up a hill and fell asleep. Unfortunately, it rained a lot and the flooded river took away some sheep and some of them died. The second day the shepherd went to the city. The owner of the sheep asked him: “Why didn’t you bring milk today?” The shepherd: “Hey, *khoja*, I told you not to mix water with milk, and yet, you did not listen to me. Last night all that water mixed with milk made a flood that took away your sheep,” he answered.

The story is indicative of moral virtues such as honesty and trust I discussed with my *oye*. Through reading and discussing stories with her, I learned conflict resolution knowledge and skills, an aspect of indigenous knowledge and culture.

My *oye* was a mentor, guide, friend, admirer, protector, and provider for me. She used to tell stories about Nasreddin (see Solovev, 1957)¹⁵ and discuss Islam, which clashed with my Soviet atheist upbringing. My *oye* was also a spiritual teacher who carried out Sufi *zikr* rituals, chanting and dancing with women in a three-bedroom apartment on the second floor in a Soviet style building. Through her ceremonies, my *oye* transformed Soviet profane place into sacred space to educate, transmit knowledge and empower the future generations. In the midst of Soviet propaganda, my *oye* provided spiritual, intellectual, and moral guidance and

¹⁴ The Muslim clergy in Turkestan consisted of a number of levels, set up not in a hierarchical order like Christian clerics. They were highly educated *otins* (teachers of basic literacy and religious education), *ulama* (scholars who had been educated in madrasas), *mullas* or *imams* who led Friday prayers in mosques and served as counselors, mediators, and leaders in communities. The other clergy were the leaders of the mystical Sufi *tariqalar*, or orders comprised of influential leaders like Hindu gurus or Hasidic rebes. A number of Sufi orders such as Naqshbandiya appeared in Central Asia and became more well-known than in other parts of the Muslim world. Some Sufi leaders were called *khoja*, *ishan*, *sheikh*, or *pir*; they performed vital roles as advisers to rulers, especially during the Timurids reign (Keller, 2001, p. 11). The *murids* (Sufi disciples) took part in the same Muslim rituals and holidays. The Sufi ritual called *zikr* [Uz.] involved chanting words in the name of God or the Shahada, “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is His Prophet,” in order to induce a trance state and hence a union with God.

¹⁵ Nasreddin *khoja* or *mulla* Nasreddin is a satirical Sufi Turkish hero who existed during the Middle Ages in 13th century under the Seljuq reign. He was a wise man famous for his stories and anecdotes (Solovev, 1957).

upbringing to create an understanding about my indigenous culture and constructive conflict resolution processes.

My study and teaching of conflict resolution in Austria and Canada often contrasted with my traditional life based on rituals and storytelling encompassing Islam, shamanism, Zoroastrism, and Sufism. I often thought that western practices assume conflict as a driver of change rather than polarization of parties in conflict; western definitions stress a shortage of resources parties in conflict fight for rather than the availability of resources to be shared. I also noticed that scholars relate conflict styles such as avoidance to Asian cultures, which creates a myth that people avoid the conflict without dealing with it directly.

Throughout my learning, I felt, ironically, that the driver of change in the conflict is the oppressed who should speak up and remake an oppressor mysteriously by telling a story. This type of storytelling counterposed my life experience and understanding of a setting where the wrongdoer can be told a story and guided by an elder to pursue transformative action with no harm to others. Women's income-generating activities, social savings networks, healing rituals, gossip, slander, cursing, subversion, and incomppliance are powerful tools of conflict resolution in Uzbekistan. This study places importance on bringing forward women's conflict resolution concepts and development practices carried out in Uzbekistan.

Peace and Conflict Studies theorize resistance as collective, organized, altruistic, and sometimes transformative social movement. This definition of resistance may not fully fit into the local context of Uzbekistan. In a context where the Soviet state provided employment but at the same time crushed *Jadids*¹⁶ and repressed many indigenous activists, people chose to subvert the state for their socio-economic

¹⁶ *Jadid* [Uz.] is a local movement of Muslim intelligentsia in Central Asia in the late 19th and beginning of 20th centuries to modernize Islam by setting western educational standards in schools. They were also interested in emancipating women.

benefits. People continued to work in the state economy but practiced their rituals and traditions. People's resistance to power as domination ("power over") is calculated through individual conformity, compliance, subversion, and may not always turn into a social movement. This study looks at the nature of gendered resistance, negotiation, and power relations at the household and community levels.

Western and many indigenous peoples in North America use mediators to solve interpersonal problems. However, due to colonization, the indigenous *qazi* court was dismantled in Uzbekistan. Western courts with their judges and the Women's committees established in Soviet times were not able to deal effectively with gender-based violence. Moreover, people are very reluctant to take a case to court because the relations cannot be restored through litigation, and people who work in the system may not represent the interests of the oppressed. In this setting, I examine how people at the grassroots level use their own conflict resolution methods and processes to bring parties to common goals, balance of power, justice, equality, sharing, and interdependent relations.

Preliminary Research

In August and September 2006, I conducted a livelihood study on the income-generating activities of rural women in Khorezm region. This research project was part of the ZEF/UNESCO project "Economic and Ecological Restructuring of Land and Water Use in the Region Khorezm (Uzbekistan)."¹⁷ The goal was to map the diversification of rural livelihood strategies in Uzbekistan and to understand its gender dimensions. It looked at existing and/or emerging entrepreneurial activities

¹⁷ ZEF stands for *Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung* (Centre for Development Research). ZEF is affiliated with the University of Bonn, Germany. The project started in 2001 with the financial support of the German Ministry for Education and Research with the aim to improve sustainability of natural resource use in Khorezm region in the context of ecological crisis in the Aral Sea which started with the water shrinkage because of intensive cotton irrigation in Soviet times.

and their relations with migration. The research gained insights into socio-economic and cultural factors that motivate women and men to engage in entrepreneurial activities and also examines the impact these activities have on gender relations and gender identities. As a result of the fieldwork and data analysis, I presented a report “Gender dimensions of rural livelihoods in Uzbekistan: The importance of emergent entrepreneurship and migration” to ZEF/UNESCO.

Because the Khorezm research was structured to look at income-generating activities and migration, the social and savings networks of women were not fully investigated. This research laid the foundation for my future Ph.D. research where I decided to examine missing areas vital for the analysis of indigenous community development and empowerment. First, the Khorezm research produced further inquiry into the formation of informal social networks of women that play an important role in selecting livelihood activities and increasing income. Second, the Khorezm study was built on a sustainable livelihood framework that worked well for the purpose of the research but did not enable me to examine more fully empowering aspects of livelihood activities. I also thought that the theoretical approaches of conflict resolution would help me to examine access to resources and their distribution.

My research on livelihood in the Khorezm region, ecologically devastated and one of the poorest regions in Uzbekistan, examined the entrepreneurial activities of women such as farming, migration, baking, trading, and others, focusing on the effects of these activities on women at the household level. During my fieldwork in the Khorezm region, I was confronted with livelihood dilemmas and explored how women and men pursue livelihood activities in spite of socio-economic and ecological constraints, such as soil salinity and water shortage. During this research I discovered my new interest in livelihood puzzles, and I questioned myself a lot regarding how

women cope with and empower themselves and each other to pursue income-generating activities. In this dissertation, I will refer to the findings of the Khorezm study to demonstrate how gender relations and identities are shifting with income-generating activities and migration to Kazakhstan, Korea, Russia, and Turkey (Tursunova, 2012b).

Women's Understanding of Feminism and Empowerment

My decision to address women's own understanding of gender equality was the result of the enormous trauma I experienced as an indigenous person in Uzbekistan and later, as a graduate student a graduate student living in North America and Canada. For example, Russian films¹⁸ portray backward Uzbek women who know nothing about equality but just marry, give birth, and attend life cycle rituals. These numerous labels and stigmatisations painfully accompanied me in my home region and other places where I became the *Other*. These constructions of the *Other* produced gendered nationalism justifying the expansion of colonial territories using dehumanized images of Muslim women, who were portrayed as the *Other*, veiled, and consequently primitive, submissive, and in need of protection.

¹⁸ The film *White Sun of the Desert* shows how the main Russian hero, the Red Army soldier Fyodor Sukhov, fights the Civil War in east shore of the Caspian Sea, which is currently Turkmenistan. Just as the soldier plans to leave for home to join his beloved wife, he is caught up in a fight between a Red Army and *bosmochi* leader Abdulla. Abdulla leaves his harem with nine veiled women. Fyodor Sukhov takes over the harem and chooses himself to protect the women from Abdulla.

Russia's films and literature produced gendered nationalism justifying the expansion of colonial territories using dehumanized images of Muslim women, who were portrayed as *Other*, veiled, and consequently primitive, submissive, and in need of protection. This film is a good example of such ideology; it starts with an image of a Russian woman carrying two pails of water on her shoulders in a green field which is projected as civilized and desired compared to a Muslim woman who is always secluded in a harem. Sukhov writes letters to his wife, a Russian woman: "Obratno pishu vam, lubeznaya Katerina Matveevna ..." ("I am replying to your letter, dear Katerina Matveevna"). However, Sukhov's interaction with a Muslim woman was ingrained in liberatory discourse. He asks a woman: "Gulchatai, otkroi lichiko" ("Gulchatai, open your face").¹⁸ When Sukhov dreams of his wife, her image as a Russian woman appears constantly throughout the film, making her a main hero. However, Sukhov's wife does not take any action and exercise agency. In contrast to a Russian woman, Muslim women in the film are veiled, secluded, domesticated, and silenced.

The word “feminism” has a negative meaning for women living in rural areas in Uzbekistan. In Ok Yul, women associated feminism with colonialism, cultural imperialism, “Russification of women,” and hostile attitudes toward Islam. In defining feminism, Lila Abu-Lughod (1998) includes not just the organized women’s movements, but also the wide range of projects that have or have had the clear goal of understanding the remaking of women. This meant

placing such projects not along a trajectory of liberation from patriarchy, but squarely within the messy situations of state-building, anticolonial nationalism, changing social orders, and the emergence of new classes. [...] the ways in which women shaped and reshaped the projects that affected them (p. viii).

Following Abu-Lughod, I consider women at the centre of socio-economic projects who are engaged in transformatory practices to ascribe meaning and value to their daily routines, livelihood activities, and ecological peacebuilding (Chapter 5); social and savings networks (Chapter 6); and healing rituals (Chapter 7).

Margot Badran (2009) defines Islamic feminism as a discourse of gender equality and social justice that comes from understanding the mandate of the Qur’an and strives for the practice of rights and justice for all people in the totality of their existence across the public-private continuum. I consider some women’s affirmation of rights as Islamic feminism. First, *otins* and women who take classes from *otins* in Uzbekistan consider that Islam announced gender equality and social justice derived from the Qur’an. These women articulate discourses of equality and social justice within an Islamic paradigm. They consider women’s rights as Allah-given rights. These women do not call themselves Islamic feminists, the term that emerged in 1990s (Badran, 2002, 2009). In my dissertation I use feminist theories. However, I do not label women’s activities as feminist because women themselves do not use the term at all. Another reason is that Uzbek language does not have such a word.

Second, I suggest that women use their own hermeneutics to construct their own discourses of equality through the prism of their utterances and practices. Women in Uzbekistan express the idea of equality and justice in their own forms of action, speech, work, and everyday practices. Women's understanding of equality is constructed, and is being constructed in their local and cultural milieu through acquired or newly acquired knowledge and experiences. I feel that these local meanings of agency correlate better with the word "empowerment."

The word empowerment has a different meaning in the Uzbek language; it means to authorize someone to do something. The western meanings of empowerment are controversial: who empowers whom? Empowerment assumes a dichotomy between passivity, subordination, and the agency of someone.

Omina opa, a young *otin*, questioned my concept of empowerment as a western theoretical framework, which is built on individual agency: choices, voice, and power. She said assertively:

Your concept of empowerment is old for us [*she pointed to the written word in my notebook*]. Women have always had power and have it now too. If for the West it is a new concept, for us it is an old concept. What is the role of a woman?

She continued and told me:

Your concept of empowerment reminds me of the story told by Obid, a local trickster. "When a husband came home, he said to his Russian wife: If my *tubeteika*¹⁹ stands like this (he turned it around a little bit), it means I am angry." His wife said, "if I put my hands on my waist, it means I want to kick you." This is your western understanding of empowerment.

What I understand from this story is that Omina opa feels that indigenous women do not want to exercise threat power like she thinks western women do, nor to distance and polarise men, but rather she wants to carry out an integrative approach to conflict

¹⁹ *Tubeteika* is a traditional Uzbek cap.

resolution towards equality.²⁰ Educating, transforming, questioning, sometimes subverting, but more importantly remaking your husband is geared towards creating a common ground to reach the goals of the family, children, and the future generations.

Much of the colonial constructions of Muslim women were challenged by scholars in the 1960s against universalizing discourses about patriarchy, Islam, and subordination (for ex. Ahmed, 1982; Hassan, 1988; Mernissi, 1975; Wadud, 1999, 2004). This story of Obid the trickster, told by a young modern *otin*, is indicative of her position on empowerment and feminism. Women in Uzbekistan resist being the carriers of the colonial project of emancipation and modernization. I knew that the word empowerment would cause many questions, and, therefore, my questions were focused on socio-economic and cultural changes in women's lives. I acknowledge that there is a gap between western and local notions of empowerment.

This research may raise lots of issues related to feminism that I may not be able to answer. This work is an attempt to address indigenous epistemologies of my peoples and push forward women's notions of empowerment through what women feel, see, hear, and experience: language, words, images, metaphors, and moments of grief, trauma, happiness, and joy.

Based on the insights of my previous research, the following understandings guide this research:

- (1) Women in rural areas in Uzbekistan form *gap*, social and economic saving networks, which serve as an alternative space to negotiate their access to and control over resources that may improve their well-being and status in the family. Their entry into the network depends on age, kin ties, and social status.

²⁰ In Uzbekistan, the Western (here, meaning Soviet) legal system replaced the indigenous system of dispute resolution. The Western legal system is associated with punishment, a win-lose outcome, polarization of the parties, the stigmatization of the offender, and the violation of the rules and interests of the legal system rather than the rules and interests of the community.

(2) Contrary to Dudwick, Gomart, and Kuenhast's (2003) stress on how people in the countries of the former Soviet Union "experience, explain, and cope with their new circumstances," (p. 2), I consider how women as social agents are engaged in transformatory practices to negotiate constraints and opportunities; their livelihoods and social networks reproduce but also transform gender relations and identities. I suggest that women's bargain with patriarchy does not prevent them from action, but creates means through which they challenge injustice, inequality, oppression, and trauma.

(3) I assume that the network of local *otin oyis*²¹ and local healers creates discursive knowledge about Islam and its practices and what constitutes Muslim identity. These local religious leaders address social and economic issues, and influence or engage in conflict resolution to resolve conflict in families with the aim to heal communities, seek avenues for change, and preserve peace.

These multiple pathways of economic mobilisation, socio-economic women's networks, and women's rituals in rural areas in Uzbekistan show how women as social agents are engaged in transformatory practices to negotiate constraints and opportunities. In my fieldwork conducted during May-October 2009 in Ok Yul in the Tashkent region, I examined multiple social changes in the post-Soviet period connected with the gendered form of income-generating activities, women's economic savings network of *gap*, and social networks of women aimed for women's empowerment and community development.

²¹ *Otin oyis* [Uz.] are religious teachers who teach Qur'anic classes to girls and women. The *otins* are also religious leaders who hold ceremonies in Muslim female gatherings.

Livelihood Activities in Ok Yul

Soviet Period

The village of Ok Yul is located near Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Two river channels, the *Urus-arik*²² and *Kum-arik*,²³ divide the village. Long ago, the place was inhabited by five or six extended households comprised of three or four generations. There was no gas, electricity, nor a water-sewer system.²⁴ In the 1930s, Stalin's forced collectivisation policy was carried out by taking land away from *ishans*²⁵ and all the livestock from people to set up a *kolkhoz* named Komintern. Intensive agricultural patterns were introduced by replacing mixed cropping²⁶ with cotton monoculture.

Collectivization caused famine across the republics. At this time Kazakhs from Kazakhstan moved to Ok Yul because of the famine caused by the Soviet collectivisation policy there. From the 1940s to 1950s, people from the Fergana Valley settled in this area because of the low population density and the availability of land. The *kolkhoz* consisted of two units. The first unit was located close to the city of Tashkent and the place was called Sara-Kul.²⁷ It was designed for growing fruits. The second unit was the *kolkhoz* Komintern, which specialized in growing cotton and raising silk cocoons, mobilising women to meet the goals of the five-year plan.²⁸

²² *Urus-arik* [Uz.] is Russian stream. The elder told me that the name of the river relates to the fact that Russians used to live close to the river.

²³ *Kum-arik* [Uz.] is Sand stream. The locals called *Kum-arik* because of the sand in the river.

²⁴ Electricity was set up in 1953, gas in the 1960s, and drinking water in the 1970s (Interview with an elder).

²⁵ *Ishans, sheikhs, khoja, or pir* are Sufi leaders who undertook important roles in Central Asian history by becoming advisers to governors, particularly in Timurids times (Keller, 2001, p. 11).

²⁶ In 1915, the following crops were grown in the Zangiata *rayon* (district), measured by area, in *desiatina*, the equivalent of 1.92 hectare or 2.7 acres: watermelons and other melons, 178; grapes, 193; winter wheat, 233; spring wheat, 41; barley, 561; millet, 25; lentils, 120; corn, 149; tobacco, 4; cotton, 5551; rice, 6714 (Alexandrov, 1923).

²⁷ *Sara Kul* [Uz.] is Yellow Lake.

²⁸ Interview with an elderly man, Karim aka. *Aka* [Uz.] is translated as brother and implies a respectful way of addressing a man who is older than you.

Silkworm production was structured as a household activity where people had to utilize their property for state-planned production. The local administration in Komintern distributed *pilla* (silkworm larvae) to the families who freed rooms for growing silk cocoons. The family members had to live outdoors in the courtyard and when it rained, people and their *ko'rpachas*²⁹ got wet. Men constructed silk beds that were set up in the house. Men cut branches from mulberry trees that grew around fields and brought them home, and women removed mulberry leaves from branches to prepare them to feed silkworms. Experienced women, mostly the elders, spread out leaves as the silkworms gradually grew. These women possessed highly specialized knowledge such as setting up the time to feed and spread leaves with worms and feeding the worms three to four times during the day. Experienced women passed their knowledge to younger women (daughters-in-law and daughters) of how to spread leaves and silkworms and also feed silkworms. Feeding silkworms was a collective activity among women of different ages. The elderly women decided when to harvest cocoons, upon which they prepared branches for silkworms to cocoon.³⁰ Growing silkworms was a state-ordered activity which was exceptionally rewarded only those persons who exceeded the normal standards of production.

People in the research site grew cotton, but during the harvest, the workers of the first unit of Sara-Kul joined to pick cotton. Until 1953, the *kolkhoz* paid a salary once at the end of the year after deducting the expenses for meals³¹ and the groceries that were taken from the *kolkhoz*'s storage. The *kolkhoz* gave wheat, onions, and other vegetables to the *kolkhozchillar*³² so that they could survive until they received their salary. Some workers were in debt to the *kolkhoz* and some earned very little. To

²⁹ *Ko'rpacha* [Uz.] is a traditional handmade mattress.

³⁰ Interview with an elderly woman, Naima opa.

³¹ The *kolkhoz* provided lunch to workers consisting of a *kosa* (bowl) of traditional soup and bread.

³² *Kolkhozchillar* [Uz.] are the workers of the collective farm.

reinforce the Soviet state policy and control over the locals, the government did not issue passports so that *kolkhoz* members would be unable to look for more lucrative positions in the city of Tashkent.³³

Changes in policy took place after the death of Stalin when Malenkov (1953-1955) served in the office as the First Secretary of the Communist Party and as a Chairman of the Council of Ministers, or Premier.³⁴ Passports were issued to *kolkhoz* members, and their salary was paid on a monthly basis. When Khrushchev came to office, he allowed people to have one cow, two sheep, and one horse. According to elderly people in Ok Yul, during the Khrushchev era (1953-1964), their privately held cattle were taken away from them with a promise of pay, but they were never paid. Some people slaughtered their cattle instead of giving it away. Suicides were evident across ethnic lines, but the largest number took place among Kazakhs because they possessed the highest number of livestock, about 200 sheep.³⁵

The salaries on the *kolkhoz* were still small and there were no improvements in the infrastructure and social system. The roads were not asphalted. Schools did not provide good education and were not equipped with heating systems. Positive developments took place in the 1960s under the leadership of Sharaf Rashidov³⁶ who managed to replace cotton with vegetable growing and also banned silk raising in this

³³ Interview with an elderly man, Karima aka. Not issuing passports to rural people was a unified policy for the whole Soviet Union. From 1932, passports were issued only to city people. Until 1953, rural people did not have passports in the entire Soviet Union. In 1953, *kolkhoz* workers were issued passports. But they still had great difficulty moving to cities because of the *propiska* (registration) system.

³⁴ Malenkov was preceded by Joseph Stalin and assumed the position in the capacity of the Premier of the Soviet Union (1953) and also the First Secretary of the Communist Party (1953-1955). He was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev who served as the First Secretary of the Communist Party (1953-1964) and as Premier (1958-1964) (Medvedev & Medvedev, 1978).

³⁵ Interview with an elderly man, Karim aka.

³⁶ Since 1950 Sharof Rashidov served as the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Uzbek SSR for nine years. In 1959 he was elected as the First Secretary of the Communist Party and held his position till 1983 (Rashidov, 1977).

location.³⁷ The three *rayons* (Tashkent, Kalinin, and Ordjonikidze districts) were created to provide the citizens of Tashkent with fruits and vegetables. Ok Yul was included in the Kalinin *rayon* and functioned as a horticultural produce provider to the city.³⁸

Independence Period Since 1991

Uzbekistan's population is almost 30 million, of which 80% are Uzbek. The remaining population consists of Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Karalpaks, Tatars, and other minorities (UZstat, 2012). The current population of Ok Yul is 10,200 of whom roughly 50 percent are women.³⁹ The major improvements in infrastructure took place in the post-Soviet period with the provision to the households of telephone lines, public water, and natural gas for heating and cooking. However, there is no public sewage system.⁴⁰ Agriculture is the main source of income, but good roads and the close proximity to Tashkent provide citizens the privilege of accessing the transportation system (busses, railroads, and air service), bazaars, and a wide range of off-farm activities. In Uzbekistan, from 2001 to 2006, women employed in paid and formal jobs comprised 44 percent of all employed people (StatOffice, 2007).

Research Goals and Objectives

This research examines the agency of women in carrying out income-generating livelihoods, diversification in response to land tenure changes in rural development, conflict resolution, and resilience mechanisms of the newly emerging

³⁷ Karim aka told me that Rashidov banned silk-raising. Rashidov certainly did not ban silk-raising. He may have changed it from mandatory to voluntary, or changed which regions raised it.

³⁸ Interview with an elderly man, Karim aka.

³⁹ Interview with the doctor of the local polyclinic in Ok Yul.

⁴⁰ People build pit toilets which consist of a hole in the ground located in a small room outside the house. Some wealthy households have sophisticated tiled floor, a small built in window in the wall, and the electricity light. Some households were able to build local sewage system which takes all human waste from the toilets and water from the kitchen through the pipe in the ground to the hole built outside the house. The hole is surrounded by bricks which separate waste from liquid and the processed waste goes back to the ground.

livelihood activities of women in Uzbekistan. An understanding of the existing livelihood activities and strategies of women and men, including migration is provided; the household milieus are examined with consideration of the availability and management of household resources, domestic burdens, decision-making processes, the intensity of participation in social networks, and the vulnerability people face. The impact of these activities on gender relations and identities at the household level and the level of well-being (livelihood outcomes) are explored.

The objectives of the study are:

- (1) to identify livelihood resilience strategies in the process of changes in rural areas from gender, age, education, ethnicity, class, location, and household status dimensions;
- (2) to determine the main characteristics of entrepreneurship in response to rural transformations in the post-Soviet period;
- (3) to explore how entrepreneurial activities empower women and increase their self-reliance, choices, and control over resources and power structures at the personal, household, and community levels;
- (4) to examine what conflict resolution methods exist and why, and how women apply these methods to solve conflicts (access to land, water, etc.); to further explore how they think their approaches differ from those of men, and how these differences could be explained; and
- (5) to examine how livelihood activities and conflict resolution can enhance power sharing, equity, equality, justice, and environmental sustainability in improving lives of rural people.

This research aims to contribute to the development priorities of Uzbekistan by providing insights on how women in a period of political, economic, and social

transition adapt, and innovate in a vulnerable context with a lack of infrastructure, social welfare, and access to resources. As access to resources and control over resources such as water, credit, land, and knowledge are vital for livelihood, this study enhances our understanding about how women manage these resources, and what, how, and why they produce and trade, and if their lives and the lives of others in their households improve or deteriorate. While the role of many women is renegotiated, the research will develop insights on how gender roles, culture, and power impact women's livelihood, their identity and status within household and also community. As women are not only the victims of oppression, but also active agents who re-make themselves and re-create their situation by using skills, knowledge, and power, the research takes an actor-oriented approach based on empowerment to reveal information on the use of innovation in designing and maintaining their entrepreneurial activities.

The significance of this study is that it employs a holistic systems approach by examining livelihood activities located at micro and macro levels. Furthermore, the research provides insights into how women's access to resources and engagement in income-generating activities lead to their empowerment and, consequently, to a change of power relations at the micro and macro levels. Understanding the gender specifics of livelihood in depth by examining empowerment and methods of conflict resolution that women applied to solve conflicts over access to resources would help those who seek to design development policies in Uzbekistan and Central Asia.

This research promotes future studies on development, empowerment, and conflict resolution from gender perspectives. Theorizing in Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies tends to focus on the oppression of women during and after war, and includes few studies on the empowerment of women. The importance of this

research for the field is that it will contribute to a better understanding of the missing link between development and conflict resolution using gender lenses. In particular, my research examines women's agency in livelihoods in a transition economy by analyzing different factors from micro to macro levels. This study advances Peace and Conflict Studies by applying narrative methodology and ethnography. To feminist studies, it provides new definitions and language around empowerment expressed by women in Uzbekistan.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. Chapter one gives a background information of my pathways to this research and women's situated knowledges of feminism and empowerment. Chapter two starts with a historical overview of land tenure changes to demonstrate continuity and discontinuity of land reforms. It describes the history of land tenure changes in the pre-Soviet period (prior to 1917), the Soviet period (1917-1991), and the post-Soviet period (from 1991 to present). For the post-Soviet period, the emphasis is on the effects of land reforms from gender, age, and rural and urban locations and draws attention to the *dehqonization* (peasantisation) of the labour force whereby highly educated skilled people became *dehqons*. It examines scholarly constructions of women and ritual life of women who reclaim power and knowledge.

Chapter three provides an interdisciplinary framework to analyze rural livelihoods at the household level, built on three pillars: (1) sustainable livelihood (SL), (2) empowerment, and (3) conflict resolution. First, the sustainable livelihood approach looks at people's access to six types of assets (natural, physical, human, economic/financial, social, cultural, and symbolic). SL examines people's capabilities for transforming and mobilizing assets to develop livelihood activities and meet basic

needs, and the ways in which people are able to diversify livelihood activities by intensifying current livelihood activities and expanding them through social networks with state and markets. Second, empowerment examines women's strategic choices that can empower or disempower them in carrying out livelihood activities. Third, women's discourses of empowerment and equality are examined to understand the ways women address conflicts and socio-economic issues.

Chapter four introduces research methods used to examine women's empowering and disempowering experiences in carrying out their livelihood activities. Because this study explored the complex dimension of livelihood, different sociological, ethnographic, and mixed methods for collecting data were used to examine continuity and discontinuity in social change in rural livelihoods in Uzbekistan. These methods included: (1) in-depth interviews to gain insights into particular issues of empowerment; (2) narrative and storytelling inquiry to gather the primary data for women's meaning-making, interpreting their livelihood experience, and reflecting about the choices women have, their agency, and the outcomes they achieve; (3) case studies to provide in-depth analysis of livelihood activities such as farming, trade, and tailoring; (4) informal conversations and participant-observation; and (5) indigenous focus groups.

Chapter five focuses on women's own understanding and responses to the post-Soviet socio-economic changes which can be seen in the growing number of migrants coming to Tashkent (capital of Uzbekistan) and in the increasing number of women working in the informal sector of the economy. Women's responses to the market are diverse and constitute three types of livelihood responses: coping strategies, preserving, and accumulating. My conclusions about livelihood responses are supported by case studies.

This chapter adds to understanding development from an Islamic perspective by exploring how religious women develop their own discourses of empowerment that is embedded in the economic system of Islam and its moral notions. These religious women and other women strategically examine new opportunities to maximize their income-generating activities and improve their own and their family's well-being; they stress acts of speaking and doing that are blessed by *baraka* (sacredness).

Chapter six discusses how *gap*, an indigenous social rotating and economic savings network among rural women in Uzbekistan, functions as a collective action for social and economic empowerment. This system of social and economic empowerment shows how women's agency, power, and knowledge reorganises male-dominated gendered space. In particular, I examine how women's *gap* and *chernaya kassa* function as mechanisms for livelihood resilience and social and economic empowerment in the post-socialist economy. I argue that traditional socio-economic networks transform economic structures and practices and enable women to pursue individual and collective goals for social justice, redistribution of resources, healing, meaning making, voice, knowledge, agency, and conflict resolution.

Chapter seven examines women's rituals and how *otin oyis* and healers exercise their symbolic power to restructure communities and transform conflicts within families and communities, maintain social order, harmony, and peace. These female leaders – through their divine access to Islamic, Sufi, and shamanistic knowledge and ceremonial practices – address injustices, patriarchy, domestic violence, property rights of women, and socio-economic empowerment of women. Religious practices, such as *mavlud* and *ihson*, and healing practices are examined to discuss how religious leaders and healers construct, challenge, and negotiate notions

of Muslim identity with their communities. These female agents form ritual and social networks of “connected knowers” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) where women act as transformers and voice their problems, trauma, and distress. These multiple networks of “connected knowers” and transformers weave peacebuilding, personal, and community empowerment to maintain social order and provide avenues *about* peace and *for* peace.

Chapter eight concludes the dissertation by summarising the research findings and articulating the significance of implications for theory and practice in areas of sustainable livelihood, conflict resolution, and empowerment.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTION AND THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

The power of the colonial order in the countryside finds expression precisely in its capacity to stabilize its income at the expense of its rural subjects (Scott, 1976, p. 94).

Introduction

Women tried to use the Soviet emancipation project to defeat patriarchy but failed to do so because the government subordinated both women and men.

Indigenous peoples interacted with the state structures, worked, and performed state-ordered plans but, more importantly, exercised their resilience by complying, performing, subverting, and living their own way of life. Consequently, I suggest that the Soviet project failed to dissolve traditional societies.

The social engineering of women's lives enjoyed partial success as women realized that they were turned into a "surrogate proletariat" or tokens in leadership positions. The Soviet colonial project did not provide transformatory choices for women, but rather privileged minority white women, placing them into token positions to destabilize the human agency of indigenous women. Hence, racialized and gendered socio-economic, cultural, and political developments imposed severe limitations for women. The introduction of the western court system and Women's Committees replaced indigenous conflict resolution practices with the aim of destroying native solidarity and community empowerment.

I suggest that religious practices allow women to have a sacred space to define their discursive knowledge about Islam, pre-Islamic beliefs, and spirituality and to reflect about socio-economic and cultural challenges. Female religious leaders such as *otins* reclaim power and knowledge with women by articulating their own vision of a

society they would like to live in. Hence, women's voices shape self-governance that is vital for community renewal, peacebuilding, and community empowerment.

Chapter Overview

This chapter consists of four sections and provides accounts of the construction of women and gender roles across these historical periods: (1) pre-Soviet period (prior to 1917), (2) the Soviet period (1917-1991), (3) the post-Soviet period (from 1991 to present in Uzbekistan). This is followed by a discussion of the cultural life of women and their observance of rituals despite official prohibitions in Soviet and post-Soviet times. In the first section, I examine colonial practices and representations of women in narratives that portray women in the pre-Soviet period, as savage, primitive, abused, forcibly married, and voiceless creatures who need to be civilized and emancipated.

The second section describes the Soviet multi-track hegemony which begins with *Hujum*, a campaign to unveil women, and initiate legal, economic, agricultural land tenure, and cultural changes. The third section highlights socio-economic and cultural changes in the post-Soviet period, describing decollectivisation, which is the movement from state-run farms into private farms accompanied by the discharge of *ex-kolkhozniks* from the collective land and collective means of production, and the erosion of the social contract between farmers and *dehqons*. The last section examines narrative structures of a society building on women's rituals that symbolise knowledge, power, resilience, and agency in preserving and maintaining oral traditions that were suppressed, not included in official history, and downgraded to collective memory.

Chapter Thesis

The Eurocentric dichotomised discourse of savage/civilized created not only distance between two cultures but also a solid platform for further colonial invasion with the agenda of the reformation of women, the weakest, but critical strata of a society in the eyes of colonizers. The agenda of women's reformation and emancipation was also brought up by *Jadids*, local male intelligentsia who thought about women's modernization and education a key step to ending inequality and women's veiling incongruent with modernity. The thesis of the chapter is that women had their own vision and goals between the Soviet goals and *Jadids'* local goals of modernisation (Kamp, 2006).

I argue that Soviet colonialism was an authoritative Eurocentric discourse, with a hegemonic ideological mode of production to disrupt human agency, reflexivity, speaking, and acting. This colonial hegemony takes place when the oppressor internalises supremacy rather than equality, individuality rather than interdependence, autonomy rather than community. Colonial hegemony oppresses children, women, elders, men, and nature to extract and deplete the human, natural, financial, social, and physical capital of indigenous peoples. This process of hegemony is not just depletion of all resources; it is supplemented by the increase of patriarchy, replacement of the indigenous dispute resolution design, and alteration of inner thinking and external action of the oppressed. A pedagogy for the oppressors needs to be developed to decolonize thinking, attitudes, beliefs, and actions to end walking backwards of the oppressed that perpetuates a vicious cycle of violence. This pedagogy is aimed to remake colonizers.

The Other is on My Land: The Pre-Soviet Period

This section describes land tenure changes under Russian imperial rule and indigenous methods of conflict resolution such as *qazi* (Muslim) courts. The destruction of the *qazi* courts in Central Asia led to the dismantling of the traditional court system and social fabric that could have been aimed toward strengthening the protection of the rights and duties of its citizens. The section describes women's agency in developing their own idea of the "New Woman's life" which emerged prior to the *Jadids'* idea about unveiling campaigns and the Soviet project of unveiling and ending seclusion to modernise women.

Muting Women: Reformation by the Colonial Russians and Jadids

The territory that became Uzbekistan, like other Central Asian lands, was integrated into the Russian Empire as a key cotton producer following the occupation of Central Asia by the Russian Tsar who was competing with the British Empire for control of the Asian heartland (Becker, 1968). Until the American Civil War of 1861-1865 which led to the reduction of the export of raw cotton, the USA had been the largest supplier of cotton to Russia. The prices for cotton grew, and Russia had to look for other sources. By 1890, the Central Asian region became the key supplier of cotton to Russia. By 1913, cotton comprised three quarters of the entire value of Bukhara and Khiva's export to Russia (Jonson, 2004). The size of the cotton crop grew drastically under Russian rule. Cotton went from being one of many crops that Central Asians raised to the major crop, and it changed Central Asia firmly to a cash economy and a dependence on Russia.

In the pre-Soviet period, the livelihoods of Central Asian peoples were either sedentary farming in arable lands or nomadic land use, searching for pastures for livestock (Chuluun & Ojima, 2002; Pomfret, 2003). Much of the land belonged to

khans and *emirs* in Khiva, the ruling elite in Central Asia. For example, in the Khorezm region (northwest of Uzbekistan) before collectivization, 90 percent of all arable land (86 000 hectares) belonged to *khans* and *emirs* and 10 percent to peasants, *dehqons* (Alimov, 1970, p. 11). Khiva was the only place where the *khans* and *emirs* owned most of the land. In Bukhara and Kokand, the land was owned by *beys*⁴¹ or other small local elites (Carrere d'Encausse, 1988). In the Russian-controlled Turkestan Territory, Russia changed the land laws in 1886 to permit people who were farming land to sell their land. Thus, Russian law instituted the idea of the private ownership of land. In Turkistan, *dehqons* were allowed to sell and buy land, except for *waqf*⁴² land. However, this land ownership law was not introduced in Khiva and Bukhara (Pierce, 1960).

Before the Soviet period, sustainable crop-mix patterns prevailed, with fruits, vegetables, grain, and cotton grown extensively. These patterns changed with the increase of a cash economy based on the expansion of cotton production at the expense of diverse food crops. Many peasants shifted from subsistence into a sharecropping arrangement, and then they fell into debt. The government of Bukhara – as had Russian imperial rulers – benefitted from taxing the peasants and supplemented this income with bribes (Carrere d'Encausse, 1988). Even when peasants in Russian-governed Turkestan fell into debt as a result of sharecropping arrangements, they were better off than people in Bukhara. Some people experiencing difficulties in Bukhara appealed for annexation to Russian Turkestan to improve their life (Lorenz, 1994). The Russian land policy aimed at enhancing their income contributed to the stratification of society by class: bourgeois, middle-class landowners, and peasants.

⁴¹ *Beys* [Uz.] are rich owners of small tracts of land.

⁴² *Waqf* is property endowed to mosques, hospitals, schools, or other institutions. These endowments helped to alleviate financial burdens and served as a tax break for the holder (Keller, 2001).

Since the conversion of people who lived in Turkestan, Samarkand, and Bukhara to Islam in the eighth century, the life of people was influenced by *shariat*⁴³ and *adat* laws,⁴⁴ which maintained religious and cultural norms and practices among sedentary and nomadic populations. Traditional *mullahs* or *imams*,⁴⁵ clan elders, tribal leaders, village leaders, and notables acted as administrators of justice in local communities. Urban and agriculturalist Uzbeks and Tajiks observed Islamic law and were judged by a *qazi*,⁴⁶ while Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Turkmen nomads addressed a *bii*, a judge in a court appointed by the government (Pierce, 1960). *Adat* existed especially in nomadic and semi-nomadic locales and was far more widespread than *shariat* while customary adjudication was relatively independent from formal structures. The adjudicative procedures were suppressed less by bureaucracy than by canonical courts headed by Muslim legal experts (Akiner, 1997).

Russian Colonialism: Agenda for the Reformation of Women

Women worked in the *ichkari*,⁴⁷ performed family chores such as cooking and sweeping, and were responsible for the household production – craft making, sewing, spinning, raising poultry, and growing silkworms. The courtyard was open to the outside and could include a garden with fruit trees. Women hosted gatherings of women in the *ichkari*. Men, women, and children used the *ichkari* for eating and sleeping (Meakin, 1903; Nalivkin & Nalivkina, 1886; Sukhareva, 1962; Zhilina, 1982).

The spatial division of a house depended on wealth, status, and the available amount of space. Wealthy families had more space and observed strict boundaries of

⁴³ *Shariat* is Islamic religious law.

⁴⁴ *Adat* is customary law more widespread among nomads.

⁴⁵ *Mullah* or *imam* [Uz.] is a male religious clergy leader who delivers prayers in mosques and life cycle ceremonies.

⁴⁶ *Qazi* [Uz.] is an Islamic judge educated in the madrasa to interpret Sharia law.

⁴⁷ *Ichkari* [Uz.] is the women's part of the house, located around the inner courtyard.

gender separation. In contrast, in poor rural and urban families, space was extremely limited and seclusion was not possible (Schuyler, 1876). Most colonial narratives by men assume that all women are secluded in the *ichkari* and, thus, position women as victims of men in a patriarchal and hierarchical structure of a society and also of Islam. Westerners saw Islam as a backward, archaic ideology that prescribes social behaviour and norms that need to be condemned and destroyed.

Veiling was widespread but varied across dimensions of ethnicity, urban or rural settings, and the social status of women. In rural areas in the Fergana Valley women wore *ro'mol*⁴⁸ particularly when they prayed. It was high-or middle-class women in urban cities who were wearing *paranji*⁴⁹ that covered the body and had a face screen woven from horsehair, called *chachvon*⁵⁰ (Nalivkin & Nalivkina, 1886). Turkmen women wore a *yashmak*,⁵¹ and had a lighter face covering that left the eyes, nose, and forehead areas open (Northrop, 2004). Kazakh and Kyrgyz women living in nomadic and semi-nomadic communities were seldom veiled, if at all. The gendered division of labour helped women and men to observe spatial separation (Akiner, 1997).

Before the Bolsheviks began promoting the modernization of “primitive” Central Asian women by means of an unveiling campaign in 1927, ideas about the modernization of life and the unveiling of women were debated by *Jadids* (local reformists) around 1910 and some early Uzbek women considered veiling inappropriate with their idea of the “New Woman’s life.” These women-agents unveiled before the Communist Party decided to unveil women and end seclusion as

⁴⁸ *Ro'mol* [Uz.] is a square kerchief folded in the middle into a triangle shape. It is worn covering the hair, tucked behind the ears, and tied at the back.

⁴⁹ *Paranji* [Uz.] is a cotton robe.

⁵⁰ *Chachvon* was of rectangular shape, made from horse hair, and was up to waist length. *Paranji* was put over *chachvon*.

⁵¹ *Yashmak* is a light face veil covering the face below eyes.

its goal of cultural modernization (Kamp, 2006). The local movement of *Jadids* called attention to the seclusion of women; the importance of education; the costs of marriage in wedding feasts, dowry, and extensive practices of gift exchange; and the practice of *qalin*⁵² and polygamous marriages. Similarly to the Bolsheviks, *Jadids* criticized arranged marriages and argued that compatibility and consent of the bride is necessary (Alimova, 2001, 2009).

As concerns social life, marriages were mostly arranged by close relatives when girls were teenagers (from 13 to 18). The groom's family provided a *qalin* to the bride's family either in money or livestock. Poor households collected funds for a continuous period to pay the *qalin*, and grooms' marriages tend to be postponed because of financial reasons. The groom's family took responsibility to provide housing for a newly married couple and bride's family was responsible for providing the *sarpo*⁵³ and furnishing the rooms (Bikzhanova, Zadykina, & Sukhareva, 1974). *Shariat* law permitted up to four wives, but sometimes rich men allowed themselves more than four wives (Palvanova, 1982).

A women seeking divorce could be asked to repay the *qalin* to her husband's family. If men sought divorce, they should pay a delayed *mahr*⁵⁴ (marriage gift), and they could ask for the repayment of the *qalin* (Nalivkin & Nalivkina, 1886). Islam permitted women to initiate divorce but, in reality, social pressure, family status, and honour constrained women from pursuing it. Meakin (1903) indicates that a divorced woman had the status of an unmarried woman, that is, a low status in society. Women believed that the *qazi* would not support their petition to divorce (Kamp, 2006). In

⁵² *Qalin* [Uz.] is bridewealth or bride price. The practice of *qalin* relates to Central Asian tradition rather than Islamic law. The groom's family gives a *qalin* in money or wealth to the bride's side as part of property exchange upon the marriage arrangement (Kamp, 2006, p.245).

⁵³ *Sarpo* [Uz.] is the collection of gifts (clothes, trousseau items) given to the bride and groom.

⁵⁴ According to Islam, a groom gives two-thirds of the *mahr* (marriage gifts) to his wife upon marriage and saves one third to give back to her in case he divorces her. This *mahr* becomes the wife's property (Kamp, 2006, p. 245).

general, gender inequalities existed because men had more rights to pursue divorce and remain financially stable as marriages were patrilocal (a married son resided with his family in their house or near their house). Men obtained their parents' property, and women had to leave their natal home, having no chance to have private property in land. Neither the local *qazi* indigenous court system nor the Turkestani court system could help to improve the lives of women (Kamp, 2006) as both systems were patriarchal. Breaking the bonds of the patriarchal indigenous system and re-imagining it in liberatory as opposed to patriarchal modes could have helped to remake social relations.

Prior to colonization, women shaped, negotiated, and manoeuvred their lives with husbands, extended family households, and markets to engage in to income-generating activities. Women in the city baked bread and sewed *kurpa* and *ko'rpacha*⁵⁵ while women in rural areas raised silkworms, sewed, and grew vegetables and fruits to gain income. Women did not go to bazaars to sell their produce because it was considered culturally inappropriate. Husbands or male relatives sold women's products for them. Livelihood activities strengthened cooperation between spouses to increase property. Widowed or single women organized themselves in groups to sell their products in bazaars. They could not shout to draw the attention of buyers as it was at odds with custom; some men stood next to female sellers and shouted loudly to sell their goods (Nalivkin & Nalivkina, 1886). Women who did not have male family members were at a disadvantage in selling their products.

Yet, it was quite a common practice that widowed women remarried to reliable men to keep their businesses running. These women remarried in order to

⁵⁵ *Kurpa* [Uz.] is a traditional mattress. *Ko'rpacha* [Uz.] is a traditional quilt.

control their husbands' activity and to have support to sell goods in the bazaars. When women thought that they did not receive enough from the sale proceeds or had a bad harvest, they indulged in stealing money or grain from their spouses (Nalivkin & Nalivkina, 1886), or selling items from home to make extra money (Nazarov, 1932). Women resisted unfair procedures and were quite strategic in seeking to improve their own welfare.

Soviet Period

When kolkhozes appeared (land was no longer private but common under the state rule), everyone thought that wives should be common and thus, shared too (Sharipa Askarova).

The section analyzes the collectivization period in the 1920s when the Soviets reorganized the land tenure system by withdrawing land from the rich ruling class, *khans* and *emirs*, to eliminate the private property of land and turn landowners into a labour force in emerging *sovkhoses*⁵⁶ and *kolkhozes*⁵⁷ (Kamp, 2004b, 2005b; Kamp & Zanca, 2005). The collectivization campaign also served the final stimulus for abolishing *waqf* land (Keller, 2001).

This section explores the Soviet trajectory of social engineering and its aim of destroying traditional solidarity in communities with a focus on Soviet women's emancipation project. I argue that the Soviet project failed to dissolve traditional societies. People did not distance themselves from the state, but rather interacted with the state to govern themselves in order to preserve, transform, and strengthen their identity, culture, and ways of living. I suggest that people's agency and resilience was expressed in complying, subverting, predicting, and adapting a new social system to their way of re-living and acting.

⁵⁶ *Sovkhoz* [Russ.] is a collective farm.

⁵⁷ *Kolkhoz* [Russ.] is a state farm.

Land Tenure Changes and Soviet Social Engineering

After the victory of the collectivization of farms⁵⁸ in the early 1930s (R. H. Aminova, 1981), the cultivation of cotton with an intensive use of fertilizers constantly increased at the expense of wheat crops (Kunakova, 1962; Oblumuradov, 1993; Spoor, 1993). During the period 1960-1985, the land in Uzbekistan allocated for the cultivation of cotton grew from 1.4 million hectares to approximately 2.0 million hectares (Spoor, 1993).

The expansion of cotton was made possible by a growing irrigation system with the diversion of the river waters from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya (Yusupov, 1982). Uzbekistan's cotton monoculture led to the shrinkage of a large saltwater lake, the Aral Sea, by more than half of its surface area in 40 years; and salinization of large tracts of land (R. W. Ferguson, 2003; Griffin, 1996). In 2008, about 200,000 tons of salt and sand are spread by the wind from the Aral Sea region within a 300 km radius every day (UNEP, 2008). The main results of the environmental problems are increased soil salinity, land erosion, water pollution, the drying of the Aral Sea (Spoor, 1998), and desertification caused by dust storms containing toxic chemicals that were used to increase cotton production (Akiner, 1998). This environmental violence goes hand-in-hand with inefficient economies, unfair social systems, and Soviet tyrannical political systems. Similarly, poor natural resource management increased the vulnerability of livelihoods, and poor management programs inhibited livelihood diversification with negative consequences for the quality of land, biodiversity, and sustainability. That is, Soviet state economic policy directly led to the dramatic deterioration of natural resources and the reduction of long-term ecological sustainability.

⁵⁸ In 1929, there were 1,516 *kolkhozes* in Uzbekistan; in 1930, 5,471 *kolkhozes*; in 1933, 9,734 *kolkhozes*. By the end of the first five year plan, 74.5% of all existing farms became *kolkhozes* (R. H. Aminova, 1981, p. 24).

Cotton-processing and other industries processing raw materials were located in Russia and Ukraine; this created a dependency on the producers of raw materials who gained less than the producers of finished cotton, thus creating uneven development between countries (Kandiyoti, 2002). Economic and social policies developed in Moscow reinforced uneven development within Uzbekistan too, between urban and rural areas. However, at least one local leader resisted this dependency on federal subsidies. Khodjaev (1929), at the XII Party Congress followed by a conference of the leaders of the national party organizations held in June 1923, pleaded for an even share of the local budget in turnover tax on raw cotton to eliminate the disincentive for local authorities to encourage its cultivation created by the incentive granted to the farmers. The leader pointed to the budget deficit caused by the unequal distribution among Republics of the USSR whereby one cannot find on the income side of the budgets of the Uzbek or Turkmen Republics any indication of the place occupied in their national economy by the production of cotton, Persian lamb, and many other kinds of raw materials. He suggested raising the price with the aim to increase the budget income at least by 20 percent.

Soviet colonial history is a story about the denial of food sovereignty which deprived people of access to food, decision-making, and having sustainable local livelihoods. Since 1908, Turkestan had been dependent on the importation of grain from Russia. Then in 1917, Turkestan's socio-economic situation faced a crisis when, the importation of grain was prevented by war and revolution in Russia, creating famine from 1917 to 1921. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks took power in Russia. By February 1918, various political actors in Tashkent and Kokand were arguing about who would dominate in Central Asia, and a group of indigenous politicians met in Kokand and declared Turkiston Muhtoriyat Autonomy. The Red Army in Tashkent,

which included both Russians and indigenous peoples (as well as some minority of Armenians who resided in the region), attacked the Turkiston Muhtoriyat in late February and shelled and destroyed most of the city of Kokand. However, the Muhtoriyat's defenders dispersed throughout Central Asia, calling themselves *qo'rboshi*.⁵⁹ They formed resistance groups against Soviet rule, and carried on armed conflict for years. To support themselves, they would take over various *kishloks* and threaten the people there with kidnapping and murder if they did not hand over food (Kamp, 2006).

The top-down centralized development with an unjust distribution of economic and political powers also resulted in indigenous knowledge loss in Uzbekistan. Wall (2006) writes that with the shift of agricultural production such as animal breeding, cotton, wool, and other products from the household level to the newly established *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses*, knowledge related to the processing of agricultural products earlier preserved by households members was basically lost or destroyed between 1917 and 1991 in gender specific ways. While these types of knowledge were lost, scientific agricultural knowledge was introduced.

Soviet Agenda: Colonial Project of Women's Emancipation

Besides economic reforms, Soviet policies targeted Muslim women of colonial spaces to modernise, emancipate, and release the chains of oppression and seclusion. The Soviet regime first introduced socio-cultural changes to eradicate traditional practices and attitudes by reorganizing the gender system in Central Asia. The intension of the Soviets was to modernise Muslim women on the basis of their

⁵⁹ *Qo'rboshi* [Uz.] is the leader of the anti-Soviet colonial movement. The Bolsheviks called them the *bosmachi*, i.e. bandits.

Soviets' ideology and their understanding that all socio-cultural aspects of life are oppressive to all women.

To emancipate whom they saw as the oppressed women of Central Asia, in 1917 the Zhenotdel was established to have contact with indigenous women. To increase the consciousness of women, the members of the organization conducted a wide range of activities starting from meetings in bath houses to establish literacy centres, women's clubs, and tea houses (Bikzhanova, et al., 1974; Buckley, 1989). Through its services and political agitation, the organization engaged women in a new economic, political, and social life (Stites, 1978). The Communist party opened schools, in particular agricultural ones, to provide basic knowledge to enhance the local economy. Women's technical colleges were established to accommodate women and girls who ran away from husbands and relatives who humiliated them. Thus, professional colleges became one of the sources for the liberation of women (Masharipova, 1990) and for encouraging them to join the workforce (Tursunova & Azizova, 2009).

The Communist Party decided to organize a campaign to emancipate women, *Hujum*,⁶⁰ related to the unveiling of women. The purpose of the campaign was to destroy the patriarchal tradition of family structures (Massell, 1974), and to directly attack gender relations, social stratification, and *shariat* (Chenoy, 1997). The first unveiling of *paranji* and *chachvon* took place on International Women's Day, March 8, 1927. In the Kattakurgan district (Tashkent region), two thousand unveiled women announced the slogan: "From this day we are free, our freedom and rights will be protected by the Communist Party, and we rely on party and the Soviet authority" (R. K. Aminova, 1975, p. 90). In 1928, about 300 women were killed by their relatives or

⁶⁰ *Hujum* [Uz.] is attack.

bosmachi across locations (Keller, 1998). The party did not anticipate the violent consequences of the unveiling campaign when thousands were killed across the country.

Many women valued the new policies aimed to emancipate them, but were caught in a state patriarchy which oppressed both women and men. The Soviet government did not support women's ideas of equality to end patriarchy (Kamp, 2006), but rather carried out top-down approaches to women's emancipation which reinforced the multilayered system of oppression. The imposed Soviet project of socio-economic empowerment was unsustainable because the policies did not transform gender inequalities in a "New Woman's" life.

Economic Changes in the Soviet Era

To achieve economic aims, the Soviet government also targeted "primitive" women to modernize them by integrating them into productive labour, "to liberate them from domestic slavery, to free them from their stupefying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery" (Lenin, 1969, p. 81). However, many women failed to advance in the administrative positions in *kolkhozes* as they themselves refused to do so because they encountered the unhealthy attitudes of their fathers, brothers, and husbands in spite of the women's personal qualities, professional skills, and level of education (Snesarev, 1974). Clearly, many women were subject to double gender ideologies perpetuated by men and also Soviet ideologies of token liberation that were effective in helping women to advance.

Women carried out the most labour-intensive and low-paid jobs in cotton and silk production, such as picking cotton manually and raising silk cocoons. Cotton-ginning mills employed Russian and Central Asian men, and sometimes women as labourers. The exploitation of women, especially in agricultural fields (Critchlow,

1991), in addition to male domination and housekeeping duties, were accompanied by poverty (Rumer, 1989). Unequal wages in comparison with other ex-Soviet Union countries, and women's workload entrapped them between responsibilities to meet the goals of a centralized economy and expectations of being housekeepers (Kamp, 2006).

Some women carried out home-based small-scale income-generating activities such as tailoring and sewing *kurpa* and *ko'rpacha*⁶¹ without directly engaging into colonial economic structure (Lubin, 1984). Women created their own economy by selling flowers, herbs, vegetables and fruits, as acts of empowerment. This allowed women to perform their daily household routines and resist the imposed colonial economic policies. The Soviet state policies resulted in women being double-burdened because they worked in factories and performed their household duties.

Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: Socio-Economic and Cultural Change

Land Reforms and Rural Dehqonization (Peasantization)

Since Independence in 1991, agriculture was privatized slowly but remained a top-down and state-controlled process based strongly on the previous planned economy and state production management similar to the *kolkhozes* of Soviet time. In the first step, the inefficient *sovkhoses* and *kolkhozes* were transformed into *shirkats*⁶² (Spoor, 2004). The work management and the system remained the same as in *kolkhozes* with a number of family brigades, production units, working on collective plots of land. To reduce the economic hardship on the population resulting from high inflation, job insecurity, delayed payments, and the reduction of social benefits

⁶¹ *Kurpa* [Uz.] is a traditional quilt. *Ko'rpacha* [Uz.] is a traditional mattress.

⁶² *Shirkat* [Uz.] is a large collective or cooperative farm.

especially to teachers,⁶³ the government distributed private plots of land (*tomorka*) of about 0.13 ha to rural people. Households that already had existing gardens of about 0.12 ha attached to their homes were additionally given the *tomorka* so that they could provide enough food for the household (Kandiyoti, 2003a). Along with the change of the land system, the *ex-kolkhozniks*⁶⁴ were turned into *dehqons* (peasants) in the sense the word *dehqon*⁶⁵ was used before Soviet times (Center for Economic Research, 2005). *Dehqons* produce food crops for self-subsistence, and sell these crops when cash is required immediately. *Dehqonization* (peasantisation) of agriculture took place by pushing the highly educated labour force in the public sector to leave their jobs (as the public sector shrank) and join *dehqon* ranks.

In 1991, the “*ijara* contract,” a private long-term leasehold on collective plots of land, was carried out. Later these reforms gained more recognition because land lease contracts were made with large state controlled enterprises or *khokims* (mayor) of the districts who became *farmers*.⁶⁶ The land belonged to the state by law while *farmers* had the right of usufruct (Spoor, 1999).

The next step of land reform took place in 1998/1999 when *kolkhozes* were transformed into *shirkats*⁶⁷ managed by local managers. Contrary to the brigade structure that existed in *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes*, the collective land was cultivated by family members on *pudrat*⁶⁸ responsible for a particular plot of land in a share cropping arrangement. In the next two years unproductive *shirkats* were shut down

⁶³ The benefits such as partial payment for utilities were taken away from teachers after gaining Independence.

⁶⁴ *Ex-kolkhozniks* are former workers of *kolkhozes*.

⁶⁵ The current name Grandfather *Dehqon*, protector of agriculture, indeed received its name after the conquest of Arabs. The word *dehqon* lost its previous meaning of “aristocrat,” “owner,” and began having a new connotation *dehqon* as one who works on land (Basilov, 1986, p. 198).

⁶⁶ *Fermer* [Uz.] is a farmer.

⁶⁷ *Shirkats* [Uz.] are collectives.

⁶⁸ *Pudrat* is a sharecropping contract of a *fermer* with a person who grows cotton, wheat, and rice.

and turned into Associations of Private and Dehqon Farmers. The *shirkats* showing economic effectiveness remained (Kandiyoti, 2003a).

Later on from 2004-2006 the *shirkats* were transformed into farms with a land lease arrangement of at least 10 hectares for 49 years held by *farmers*. The *farmers* having these contracts with large state-controlled enterprises or *khokims* (mayor) of the district are referred to as “*farmers*” or “*private farmers*” with plots of land that cannot be privatised, or be subject to sale or purchase, exchange, gift, or used as collateral or sub-leasing.⁶⁹ The leasing contract stipulates the usage of the major part of the land for cultivation of state-ordered crops of strategic importance such as cotton and wheat.

The current system of agriculture is based on private farming which is controlled by the state through state orders and state procurement of strategic crops as cotton and wheat. The *farmers* are obliged to sell cotton to cotton gins and wheat to wheat plants at prices fixed by the government. The procurement prices paid to *farmers* are low in comparison to world market prices, especially when one takes into consideration the large gap between the official and the market rates, a large outflow of resources via implicit taxation (Kandiyoti, 2003b). The bank account, the allocated credit for cotton and wheat, and all calculation of the expenses are determined, strongly monitored, and implemented by government officials. In case the *farmers* do not meet official state ordered plan targets or fail to be economically viable, the *farmers*’ land can be taken back with no guarantee to return the investments made by the lease-holder. Since 1991, the *farmers* lease the land on an *ijara* contract, a private long-term leasehold on collective plots of land that stipulates the usage of the major

⁶⁹ The Charter on Private Farm approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 476 “On Measures for the Implementation of the Concept of Private Farm Development,” dated October 30, 2003.

part of the land for cultivation. However, the land remained state property (Falkingham, 1999; Trevisani, 2007b).

These land reforms were accompanied by economic degradation and poverty. This economic situation urged household members across gender and age groups to combine paid employment with agricultural production: self-subsistence, the sale or barter of produce from household plots of lands, and income from trade and other informal activities. Different entitlements such as pension and maternity leave subsidies started playing a crucial role in household income (Kandiyoti, 1998, 2002, 2003a; Koopman, 1998; Spoor, 1995). Women, in particular young women, have to diversify livelihood strategies such as working in cotton fields, in rice paddies on *tomorka* and farms, and in household plots of land. At the same time, they bear the domestic burdens of cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, performing life cycle events, and being involved in the social life of the community. The lack of mechanisation of agricultural work – for example, much cotton is hand-picked – and a reliance on mutual harvesting agreements between kin and community members increases women’s workload (Kandiyoti, 2003a).⁷⁰

Men usually receive a better-paid job like ploughing and women take more poorly paid jobs such as cotton-picking which stratifies gender relations in the family. Also, men in rural areas started migrating which led to the feminisation of agricultural labour. Women choose to do this labour to gain some income but also they look for other alternatives because cotton-picking is a seasonal job. Some women combined working in the public sector jobs with local trade such as selling herbs, and others migrated to Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkey. Thus, the agrarian reforms enhanced the

⁷⁰ Men usually plough land and irrigate it.

feminisation of labour and affected livelihood patterns and intra-household relations across gender, age, status, and class faultlines (Tursunova, 2012b).

The gender construction of property management restrains women from property rights (Ellis & Allison, 2004) despite women's enormous contribution to the survival of the family farm and the development of rural institutions and communities (Haney & Knowles, 1988; Salamon & Davis-Brown, 1988). In Central Asia, the general structure of farming is mostly male-dominated embedded in kinship, the household's life cycle, and extended household relations.⁷¹ The privatisation of farms went along the same gender lines as the management of the collective farms in Soviet times, being male-dominated.

The Soviet period did not succeed in promoting women into administrative positions in the collective farms. In Khorezm, technical jobs as tractor driver, engineer, and leading management positions in administrative and agricultural areas were male-dominated (Snesarev, 1974). In post-Soviet times, men, mostly from the administrative and the agricultural sector, registered farms in their wives' name to be entitled for full farming. The number of registered female-led farms is small and very few women amongst the registered, in fact, run the farms. The actual female *farmers* are those who used to provide administrative and technical support in the agricultural sector. They face constant struggle with the male-dominated system that decreases their access to resources.

⁷¹ It is recognized in agricultural studies globally that men think of themselves as owners of the farms, and of wife's work on the farm as just contributing or helping. Men think that women's work is not central to income-generating activities of the farm, no matter how much she really is carrying the workload.

Land Reforms Implementation in Ok Yul

The private farms⁷² encompass about 460 hectares of arable land which is leased to households in two ways: on *plan* or *rent*. The lease of land on plan implies that 80% of the crops sold will be given to the farmer and 20% to the leaseholder (*dehqon*). The farm's responsibility is to plough the land while the leaseholder manages the cultivation and harvesting of crops including the purchase of fertilizers and hiring labourers. The sale of crops is mutually dependent on the farmer and a leaseholder.

The second method is rent with the lease of one hectare of land for two million *so'm* (U.S. \$1,117) for one year or one million *so'm* (\$558) for half a year. The leaseholder is responsible for all inputs, including ploughing, and earns all the profit from the crops sold. People prefer a rent rather than an on-plan arrangement in order to have flexibility in making choices regarding seed selection, crops, planting, and selling for cash. *Farmers* resist state-ordered plans by growing cash crops such as cauliflower (sometimes Dutch), strawberries, and beetroot. *Dehqons* rent the land to plant these cash crops to maximize their profit.

Women's Livelihood and Agency

The transition to a market-oriented economy opened new opportunities for men and women and had an impact on gender roles and expectations. The perceptions of gender roles and identities did not change (Kamp, 2005a). Kamp (2005a) researched income, labour, and gender ideas, which she conducted in focus groups in the early years of Independence 1996 and 1997 in Uzbekistan. She found that choices in designing coping strategies – such as “entering the bazaar,” changing jobs, moving, and economizing – were shaped by social positioning based on class, gender, and

⁷² People in Ok Yul always referred to a farm as “*kolkhoz*” or “*sovkhos*.”

ethnicity. “Entering the bazaar” for Uzbek and Tajik women (except Bukhara women) was considered an unpleasant alternative even though they spoke positively about two types of entrepreneurship: baking and sewing. Uzbek and Tajik male white-collar employees regarded income-generating from the market as a dramatic loss of social status. They called for control of “re-sellers” and “profiteers.” On the contrary, Bukhara Uzbek men and women viewed the new situation as an opportunity to earn income in an unregulated way. Russian women stressed their need to supplement income, but unlike Uzbek and Tajik women, Russian women talked a good deal about changing jobs or professions, and little about engaging in entrepreneurship.

The Khorezm study revealed that in spite of traditional gender roles, significant transformations took place in migrant families. In these families migrant women brought higher income than men and questioned gender roles and expectations. Some women stated firmly that “women feed men.” Some men expressed concern of the radical shift of gender roles and characteristics impacted by the inability of men to bring income, “men becoming women, and women becoming men.” With labour migration and income, power relations are reversed; authority, rights, and responsibilities are claimed differently within the household. Changing gender relations and identities expand women’s choices in altering access to resources, their allocation, and decision-making power.

The Scholarly Construction of Women

Besides *Jadids* and Soviet ethnographic accounts, Russian and western travelers and scholars created specific ideological narratives of people’s daily lives of what is now known as Central Asia. Similarly to Said (1993), I propose that examining the relationship between the West and its dominated peripheries labelled “others” is not merely a simple way of describing an oppressive relationship between

unequal actors, but also a space for studying the construction and meaning of western cultural beliefs and practices. In the early 1860s, the travelers in their memoirs (Ignatiev, 1858; Pahlen, 1964) portrayed Russian imperialist endeavours driven by economic, military, scientific, and military interests (Evans, 1984).⁷³ The travelers and scholars describe social practices as primitive, backward, yet to be civilized. These narratives helped to create an ideological foundation for the beginning of expansionist policies.

Colonial history is the “story of a specific form of domination, namely of patriarchy, literary his-story” (Smith, 1999, p. 29). This his-story with Marxist class emergence considers women as constituents of a “surrogate proletariat” that lack sexuality, voice, and the ability to reflect and speak up. The female characters are *Other*, secluded, veiled, living in a harem with a despotic husband but exotic, tempting, and alluring to some extent. The American missionary to Central Asia in 1926 describes a “woman” in Bukhara “as conspicuous by her absence:”

No man ever sets eyes upon a lady not his own, for in the street she is nothing but a perambulating sack with a black horse-hair screen where her face is likely to be. The women live in a strictly separate part of the house, often having its courtyard and its pond. Only now and again one meets them at dawn or nightfall, stealing out furtively to fetch water. They shrink at the sight of a stranger and veil themselves in all haste. The children, of whom the usual quantity abounded, were suffering from sore eyes, a result of the all-pervading dirt amid which they live and the pestering flies that take advantage of defenceless babies. In the whole, women make the impression of children, and in the outlying districts, of savage children. They are inexpressibly filthy in the villages and are everywhere on a far lower social grade than the men. One may say that the highest woman in the land is inferior to the lowest man (cited in Northrop, 2004, p. 33).

⁷³ The period of 1839-1860 was a turning point in Russian’s diplomatic relations with Central Asia. N.P. Ignatiev was a leader in making the transition to the use of military force to conquer Central Asia. Evans (1984), who read Ignatiev’s memoirs, points out that Ignatiev was an “extremely vain person. He fits the mold of an aggressive diplomat who was motivated by a cause. Pan-Slavism was his bag. He was no egalitarian but a Russian who stated over and over that the natives were inferior and white Christian Europeans were superior. Further he felt that Russian were superior to other Europeans because of their faith in God and Tsar. Ignatiev really believed that Russia was destined to rule Central Asia and the world. His strident Anglophobia could never be concealed. Without England Russia would rule the world” (p. 132).

This image fits into the traditional stereotypical understanding of male dominance and the location of women in a particular place, setting boundaries where her gender roles and identities are strictly defined. She is bodiless, does not have sexuality, and her geography of pleasure through western scholarly perspective is neither directly exposed to the public, nor is it complex. This is an example of a dominant narrative that portrayed women as exotic, domesticated, stoned, beaten, and secluded in their *ichkari*⁷⁴ with restricted mobility and contact with the outside world.

Nalivkin (2004), in his essay “Natives Before and Now,” reports that when such *qazi*-imposed penalties as whipping or stoning for adultery that existed to maintain social control and proper moral behaviour were abolished, men started drinking freely, and women and young girls started living with Russian men to be supported by them. With Russian colonialism, brothels were legalized with common instances where a man married four wives and then prostituted them. These prostituted women were generally in a legal relationship with their pimp/husband. People stopped attending mosques, praying, and fasting. The roles of the indigenous court system and *qazi* as well as *madrassas*⁷⁵ were degraded.

Nalivkin believes that women who chose prostitution and men who committed adultery and drank gained liberation. Nalivkin values men’s freedom at the expense of women’s freedom. Nalivkin specifies that these groups of people were “freedom-loving natives” (p. 73) and others were not. He undermines people’s freedom which serves the interests of the colonizers. Prostitution and alcoholism fractured families and community cohesion. Those women who did not veil started veiling in the nineteenth century to differentiate themselves from prostitutes (Schuyler, 1876).

⁷⁴ The house was divided into *ichkari* (inner) and *tashkari* (outer) space. Women, men, and children lived in the *ichkari*. Men and guests moved freely in the *tashkari*, a public space of the house (Schuyler, 1876).

⁷⁵ *Madrassa* [Uz.] is a school for religious education.

Women were victims of their husbands as well as colonial projects that left them destitute with no means to survive and even more in debt to the colonizers.

The Russian nineteenth-century writings equate veiling and sexual segregation with the inferior position of women. Colonial narratives demonstrate the universal operation of male dominance and female oppression. The Zhenotdel analysis of women was the entry point in the narrative of Soviet history held by the Communist Party which started its civilizing mission by attacking female seclusion in the unveiling campaign, or *Hujum*,⁷⁶ of 1927 (Massell, 1974; Northrop, 2004). The Zhenotdel project of women's emancipation was top-driven and did not take into account women's grassroots voices.

Hujum is considered a vital cornerstone in the liberation of women, especially by local historians who argue for the ideological and political consequences of women's liberation (Alimova, 1991; Khakimova, 1974; Palvanova, 1982). Scholars internalized Soviet propaganda and the colonial narratives of the discourse of emancipation. They stress the consciousness-raising of oppressed women who finally moved from the *ichkari* to the public arena: participating in the workforce, education, and public life (women's clubs where meetings and debates were held); and having the right to divorce and own land.

As with local scholars in Uzbekistan, Constantine (2001) stresses the progressive aspect of *Hujum* in terms of women's achieving equality with men not only before the law but also in everyday life. Similarly, Akiner (1997) expresses the importance of Soviet reforms in changing women's traditional practices and gender reproductions in the modern life of women. She specifies that contemporary women grew up with Soviet values and norms, discarding the veil and entering a new epoch

⁷⁶ *Hujum* [Uz.] is attack or assault. The Soviet campaign was aimed to liberate and emancipate women in Central Asia and Azerbaijan from traditions. The campaign to unveil women began in 1927 and lasted until the 1930s.

of enlightenment; the past life became remote, alien, and primitive. This analysis does not include women's agency and their own experiences, and representations. Massell (1973), on the other hand, regards the whole *Hujum* as a colonial tool to destroy Uzbek culture. He indicates that the Soviet reforms used and manipulated Uzbek women.

Marianne Kamp (2006) conducted oral histories in 1992-1993 with women who lived through the 1920s and 1930s in order to understand women's responses to Soviet modernization and *Jadidism* (the indigenous movement of modernization). Kamp found that women developed their own new understanding of the New Woman between the Soviet Bolsheviks' program of women's equality and *Jadidist* goals of modernisation. Women believed that education is a key to ending women's seclusion, and inequality and veiling is incompatible with modernity, and thus wanted to make wearing *paranji* illegal.

Second, Kamp views *Hujum* and the counter-*Hujum* as an illustration of lasting cultural conflict among Uzbeks, and not as a project ordered by Moscow and resisted by anti-colonial Uzbeks. Thirdly, unveiled women tried to overthrow an oppressive patriarchal structure, but failed to mobilize government support because the state subordinated both men and women to itself. Thus, the balance of power moved away from patriarchal dominance within the family to state patriarchy, and women's bargaining power changed. Women's efforts to overthrow and gain control over the structures of patriarchy did not succeed as fully as the ambitious economic goals of the Soviets. Yet, women also made strategic choices of deciding to unveil, making their life more public and also resisting patriarchy. Despite being betrayed by the state, women made their voices heard and also brought a new vision of gender equality.

Thus, I would argue as Chandra Mohanty (1991) does that “it is not the center that determines the periphery” (p. 73) because the Russian colonial project was not able to completely capitulate women; Uzbek women and men were able to shape their lives and social construction of meaning. I suggest that women had their own indigenous project of decolonisation expressed in their self-determination, mobilisation, and articulation of their own vision.

Women’s production of cotton and vegetables ensured and determined the centre, the well-being and food security of Russians. Food is sacred for people in Uzbekistan. Providing food was a way to reach across the divide between the colonizer and the colonized, open the colonizer’s mind, senses, hearts, and spirit; and to build relations; and hence, remake colonizers. The colonized determined the key area of the colonial centre, its economic development at the expense of human and economic destruction of my peoples. Russians familiarised themselves with Central Asian cuisine but failed to build sacred human relations with the *Other*.

The colonial hegemony became established in the USSR because the oppressor constructed, promoted, normalized white supremacy over equality; individuality over interdependency; and autonomy over community. This racialized oppression of children, women, elders, men resulted in the depletion of human, natural, financial, social, and physical capital of indigenous peoples. Further, this process of hegemony involved the increase of patriarchy and the replacement of indigenous dispute resolution designs with a court system and Women’s Committees which reinforced multilayered system of inequities.

In contrast to Freire who assumes that the oppressed do not have critical consciousness, I suggest examining pedagogy for oppressors to decolonize their thinking and actions. This process of the oppressors’ decolonisation is not a mere

process of hearing the stories of oppressed; it is an integral process of self-humanization leading to actions which can foster transparency, humility, love and building sacred relations in our globalized world.⁷⁷

Gregory Massell (1974) explores the goals and methods that Soviet political power used in radical transformation of women's lives in traditional societies where political structures and traditional solidarities are based on kinship, custom, and religion. Massell explores how Soviet revolutionary attempts aimed to create reliable access to Central Asian societies, to weaken native solidarities and lay the groundwork for an efficient mobilization system: one approach from above – the use of coercive power to subvert obstructive elements, especially the rural elite, and the another approach, a search for a weak link in society, and critical actors.

Douglas Northrop (2004) argues that Uzbek identity is mainly a Soviet creation constructed by Bolshevik efforts. He indicates that “Uzbeks today are merely nationalist patriots or Muslim believers; they are neither simply Sovietized nor Russified nor Westernized [...] they are, in complicated, individual ways, all of these things, and more” (p. 34). Clearly, Uzbek identity is socially constructed, and increasingly influenced by cultural pressures of colonialization, assimilation, and globalization, that is, a reformulation of earlier representations of peoples as “primitive.” I argue that Northrop's analysis negates and/or fails to recognize the

⁷⁷ My point resonates with Audre Lorde's (1980) idea that the oppressed “are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor ... Whenever the need for some pretense of communication arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge with them. In other words, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors their mistakes ... By and large within the women's movement today, white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age” (pp. 1-2). In fact, Lorde strongly contradicts Freire's idea about the consciousness-raising of the oppressed who should engage into dialogue with oppressors. Like Lorde, I believe that oppressed are conscious about the situation. The issue is whether or not the dominant white class is willing to give up their power. Lorde suggests white women have reason not to do so because, for white women have a wider range of pretended choices and rewards to benefit from patriarchal power and methods of oppression.

degree to which a people have a collective historical, linguistic, and cultural identity, and their capacities to make meaning of their lives in ways that determine their own cultures, as well as resist or even outwit power.

Marianne Kamp (2001) shows how socially constructed identities are complex and change over time and how women negotiate and represent themselves. In her article “Three Lives of Saodat,” Kamp (2001), drawing on oral histories, compares three historical moments in the life of Saodat Shamsieva, a journalist, editor, and a member of the Communist Party from 1933 to 1991. Kamp argues that Saodat Shamsieva’s agency is demonstrated in “her ability to interpret her experience and re-cast her identity as new politics and new narratives enable and constrain her choices” (p. 21). In her analysis, Kamp concentrates on Shamsieva’s personal attitudes, behaviours, and ability to cope and to survive. Many elements of her first memoir conformed to standard Communist images, but were advanced into a more “patriotic” story. In her post-Independence account, there is heroic recollection. Saodat’s affiliation with political life is finished, and her narrative evolved around her family more clearly than in her earlier accounts. In describing her family, Saodat Shamsieva did not present her family life as a new “idealized locus of identity,” but rather selected another discourse of her identity – identity based on blood, race, and culture. In fact, Saodat stressed her agency as being “mestizo,” combining Afghan and Horazm origins.

Elizabeth Constantine (2001) used an oral history approach to explore the influence of Soviet ideology and gender roles and attitudes among Uzbek women during Soviet rule in Uzbekistan. Based on her research, she argues that “contrary to general belief, the Soviets enjoyed considerable success in their efforts to transform gender roles and attitudes among Uzbek women, and that Soviet ideology and rhetoric

on women continues to inspire many Uzbek women today” (p. vi). Constantine sees the Soviet rule as emancipatory for women. Alternatively, Kamp (2006) while recognizing emancipatory aspects also identifies ways in which Soviet political life constrained women’s and men’s actions, and that Uzbek society constrained women’s choices.

Martha Olcott (1991) believes that women’s lives prior to Soviet contact were terrible. She argues that the reason for the failure of the Soviet reforms was the traditional ways of life which were in contradiction with the development of an industrialised society. She views jobs introduced by the Soviets after 1917 as an alternative to prostitution or suicides and a significant, desirable option for women to escape domestic problems. Other scholars stress feudalism and Islam (Buckley, 1989), traditional patterns of life (Buckley, 1985; Lapidus, 1978), male domination and female exploitation in the agricultural sector (Rumer, 1989), and indicate the failure of the Soviet reform in bringing radical changes in people’s ways of thinking and living. In general, the western studies based extensively on Soviet materials perpetuate Soviet attitudes, and do not question how women themselves interpret and experience social change and make choices in their new context.

The contemporary post-communist period imposes its own trajectories on the lives of women which shape their socio-economic opportunities and constraints. The dominant post-Soviet narratives (e.g., interpretations of Islam and the roles of women and men) and historical events (e.g., land reforms and market regulations) affect the ways women tell stories. Miller (1998) suggests that autobiographical narration involves a “more integral paradigm for explaining, critiquing, and experiencing how contemporary life is lived” (p. 318).

I suggest that women in Uzbekistan are engaged in remaking the self in words and actions by interpreting, criticizing, and speaking about their lived experiences and how choices are made. Women's personal stories enable me to look at individual storylines and experiences that represent women's lived experiences during the 1990s market reforms. The collected stories highlight women's situated knowledges and also their participatory mode of consciousness and knowing that women produce not only in their economic but also social and religious lives.⁷⁸ I consider both individual consciousness and participatory methods of knowing in women's stories. I locate participatory methods of knowing in livelihood practices that speak to reflexivity.

So how did the Soviets try to develop female roles to engineer social change? Massell (1974) suggests that the Soviet unorthodox approach was based on the breakdown of the traditional family structure and kinship system achieved through the mobilization of women. In the Soviet imagination a structural weak point was the position of Muslim women, "the lowest of low" – an exploited, degraded, and constrained surrogate proletariat where the proletariat had not existed at all. Kamp (2006) argues that the Soviet regime did not consider women as agents of revolutionary transformation, but rather vital to their approach because these exploited women would provoke upheaval in a traditional system of values, customs, relationships, and roles starting with the extended patriarchal family. The motives and goals of the Communists were complex. On one hand, the Soviets searched for the

⁷⁸ Heshusius (1994) critiques notions of "connected knowing" whereby the "knower is attached to the known" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 6) for the assumption that the knower is seen as separate, alienated from the known. The scholar calls for a participatory mode of consciousness which reorders understandings of relationship "between self and other (and therefore of reality), and indeed between self and the world, in a manner where such a reordering not only includes connectedness but necessitates letting go of the focus on self" (p. 15). "The act of coming to know is not a subjectivity one can explicitly account for," but precisely it is of a "direct participatory nature one can account for" (p. 17). The participatory mode of consciousness does not separate the knower from the other person, distance, or apply dominant thoughts, methods, and formulations between self and other.

weak link, and on the other hand, they thought that working with the weak link would empower women to develop skills for self-reliance.

I argue that the Soviet policy was based on a deliberate and ideological standpoint of discursive colonialism aimed to develop a certain mode of scholarship about women in the Third World as a monolithic subject of knowledge who are codified as *Other*, “Third World difference.” The notion of “Third World difference” portrays women as a homogeneous group of victims experiencing shared oppression, shared victimhood, and shared miserable destiny while the portrayal of Russian women created an image of equality and oppression-free lives. The Soviet colonial project privileged Russian women to emancipate women in the East and situated them in high administrative positions to contribute to the oppression of women in Central Asia.

As discussed above, scholars studied culture and the impact of cultural change brought by contact between different groups or as a result of revolutions. Uzbek feminist scholar Marfua Tohtahodjaeva (1996) reflects on the “women’s question”⁷⁹ by listening to the narratives of her family members and by examining the relationship between the production of knowledge and hegemonic authority: history, gender, and culture. Tohtahodjaeva states that Sovietisation changed society and served as an impetus for its modernization. The Soviet authority acknowledged the legal rights of women, provided free education at all levels, health care, and space for women in public and ended seclusion. The segregation of women was eradicated in the fires of *Hujum*. However, the Soviet policy positioned women mostly in subordinate roles as cotton labourers and in professional spheres, thus further segregating them.

⁷⁹ The Communist party of the ex-USSR considered women’s participation in socialist economy, social and legal protection as focus areas of women’s equality and emancipation.

The establishment of *kolkhozes* as part of the planned economy brought changes in the social organization of life. Roy (1999) argues that *kolkhozes* in Central Asian Soviet Socialist Republics were social institutions signifying a continuation of earlier existing tribal, clan, family, or ethnically founded forms of social organization. These new social organizations located themselves toward the state. While Russian *kolkhoz* executives represented the state interests, local *kolkhoz* executives in Central Asia had committed interests in their locality which grew and reinforced after Uzbekistan gained independence. While Kandiyoti (2003b) argues that social relations expressed in reciprocity and solidarity eroded in communities, Roy (1999) sees *kolkhozes* as an indigenous form of civil society with social ties produced and maintained by people.

Unlike Roy, I see *kolkhozes* as oppressive state institutions serving a link between central authorities in Moscow and local elites. I consider indigenous communities as self-governing. People did not run away from the state's oppression but positioned their knowledge and ways of living as arts, culture, identity, language, kinship structure, and subsistence agriculture at the family and community levels. They did so to separate their livelihoods and their ways of living and acting from the state intervention.

But how do women exercise their personal or collective power by defining goals to improve their livelihoods and acting upon them? In previous research on entrepreneurial activities of women conducted in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan in 2006 (Tursunova, 2012b), I found out that women exercise their agency in the context of gender-specific (division of labour and emphasis on reproductive roles of women), gender-intensified (asymmetrical distribution of resources), and imposed gender constraints (discrimination in accessing resources). Women narrated about

their life starting with an epiphany related to the death of a husband, a brother's unemployment or low-income, and sickness. Their testimonies show gender-specific violence related to their mobility as they had to bribe gangsters in order to reach to Russia for trade. Women's testimonies identified gender-imposed constraints that limited their selection of livelihood activities.

Other scholars, such as Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes (2005), argue that women lost position and achievements gained in the Soviet era and thus, lost their voices too. She hopes that "at some point in the journey Central Asian women will reclaim their voices, write about their experiences, hopes and aspirations and be published in doing so" (p. 5). The participants of my study, indigenous women would disagree with Concoran-Nantes's opinion, and indicate that they are social agents with power, knowledge, rights, and duties who pursue their vision of equality, justice, and peace.

Rituals as a Narrative Structure

All societies have oral traditions and rituals which are part of customary cognitive models that help members construct and maintain knowledge of the world. New political discourses generate different kinds of social analysis, leading to different interpretations of events, one of which gets included in official history, the other relegated to collective memory (Cruikshank, 1998). I argue that new political discourses produced an official transcript, a Soviet storyline hiding atrocities and injustices and, consequently, created a hidden transcript, the personal stories of responses to Soviet reforms which constitute collective memory, an accurate narrative structure of the society in Uzbekistan. In this section, I discuss the effects of prohibition of rituals and women's agency in preserving and reclaiming their sacred space.

I suggest that these religious rituals reflect women's agency in responding to rapid social changes in post-socialist space where women form and contest discursive knowledge about religious practices and socio-economic context. In this context, women's voices represent the art of governing themselves in developing their own understanding of the situation.

Rituals: Destruction, Preservation, and Restoration

Oral traditions have been explored to elucidate the social life of many indigenous peoples of the past. In Yukon, the life history accounts of Athapaskan elders are embedded in maps of named glaciers, lakes, mountains, land, eddies, and sloughs (Cruikshank, 1990). The natural landscape, especially glaciers, stands importantly in both indigenous oral traditions and narratives of geophysical sciences. The natural landscape is threatened by global warming at Arctic and Subarctic latitudes (Cruikshank, 2001). Oral traditions as part of narrative structures reflect social, political, environmental, and economic processes conveying the changes of the past and differ across cultures.

Oral traditions of the indigenous peoples around the globe draw on ancient times which focus on the interrelationship and interdependency of nature with people which can be considered a web of relations. Peoples' well-being is connected and dependent on the quality of relationship with animals and plants. Many indigenous peoples believe that everything is animate and, thus, possesses spirit and special knowledge. In these creation stories the symbolic associations are gendered: sky is our father, and earth is our mother where the process of ongoing creation and renewal take place. Time is cyclical, and creation and renewal are drivers of continuity with new changes. Indigenous knowledge is counterposed to the mainstream Eurocentric scientific worldview where humans dominate over nature rather than being part of

nature. In a Eurocentric worldview, time is seen as a linear progression where humans are autonomous and individualistic agents of progress.

Russian expansion and the creation of colonies in the Soviet Union were legitimized at the expense of indigenous peoples and through the domination of western scientific knowledge over indigenous peoples' knowledge. Indigenous peoples carry out renewal ceremonies and tell stories to preserve knowledge about the integrity of all beings in the maintenance of the creation and the renewal of a society. These narratives are significant because they are built on natural resources such as land, water, and fire which interact with humans to establish and maintain their livelihood.

As cultures have narrative structure to understand the past (Cruikshank, 1998), the stories are situated in the context of Great Sacred Time contrary to profane time. The abolition of profane past time was accomplished through rituals that signified a sort of end of the world (Eliade, 1961). Navruz, the New Year is the time for "purifications," for the removal of sins, and misdeeds. It is also a time for the moving from past to future with renewed collective aspirations and goals. Through the continuity and discontinuity of narrative structures expressed in creation stories and the ceremony of Navruz (Central Asian New Year), we can see how the Soviet cognitive models produced patriotic, military, and productive state-order economy celebrations (May 1 – Labour Day, February 23 – Red Army Day). The Soviets ignored and erased spiritual, religious, social, and cultural analysis of indigenous peoples, collective memory while new Soviet celebrations became part of his-story.

In Uzbekistan Navruz was banned as a Muslim holiday by the Soviets by the 1930s. The holiday was later re-established as a pre-Islamic festival of Zoroastrian origin. By the 1960s, Soviet ethnographers had gathered a large amount of material on

the survival of beliefs existing before Islam in Central Asia. This was done to show that the banned Navruz holiday was connected to the agricultural festivals of the Zoroastrian time. Having stated that Navruz has folk-agricultural origin, the holiday was seen by the state as harmless to its interests. About twenty years later, in the 1980s, Navruz was prohibited again on the orders of a high-ranking official based on its being seen to have a dangerous Islamic dimension. After *perestroika* Navruz was not only reinstated, but also promoted to the status of a main national holiday following the Independence of Uzbekistan gained in 1991 (Kandiyoti & Azimova, 2004).

Navruz represents a folk culture of Uzbek people; it is celebrated on March 21st each year. It dates back to Zoroastrianism, a religion originating in Persia. The holiday celebrates change and renewal, an awakening of nature after winter, and the beginning of agricultural cultivation and harvesting. During this time families visit each other. Women gather and cook *sumalak*, which is made of flour and sprouted wheat grains. The sprouted grain is a symbol of life, warmth, abundance, and health. It is cooked usually on a wood fire in a big pot surrounded by women. Women take turns to stir *sumalak* during an eight to ten hour period, during which they share their life stories, happiness, and problems in post-socialist period. These stories create community by serving as a means for the social construction of identity, knowledge, memory, and emotion. These processes involve the negotiation of power relations among the community members. Storytelling breaks the silence around issues and conflicts and contributes to the creation and strengthening of communities. Women exercise their agency, negotiate power, share experiences, and redefine their own images. They create meaning. Such storytelling promotes mutual understanding, builds trust, and allows for diversity within unity. Such storytelling provides a sacred

space for shared power and provides a knowledge base, and creates avenues for change and growth. In these ways, rituals and storytelling builds community and produce knowledge located in a web of interaction, interconnection, and intercommunication among cosmology, human beings, and the universe.

Rituals and stories are primary ways in which people in Central Asia organize the understanding of time. These events themselves create the order of time. For many centuries Central Asians have been aware of and guided by cycles of moon, sun, and seasons and carried agricultural, religious and other holidays. Abbott (2002) indicates humans have been generating time as a succession of events, that is, narrative. I suggest that rituals and stories are narratives and the narrative structures of individuals and a society which order particular sequence of time. However, people change the meaning of holidays in response to political changes.

Women's Rituals: Reclaiming Indigenous Power and Knowledge

Power relations between and within communities are encoded in knowledge and language (Foucault, 1972). During early Soviet times anthropologists and ethnographers collected life histories to study cultural facts about local people. The Soviet anthropologists drew attention to the traditionalism of the everyday life of people in Uzbekistan. Snegarev (1974) indicates that despite Soviet cultural and atheist education, consciousness, ideas, and rituals from the past were not erased. He argues that despite the triumph of Soviet ideology and the belief that orthodox Islam and the whole complex of survivals – including the “primitive kind” – had decayed, different sets of religious ideas and practices existed alongside Islam, preserved by women. He called them “preservers of survivals” with their own “female religion” practicing animism, magic, the cult of ancestors and nature, the cult of saints and their graves, and shamanism. The survival of these acts is due to a “certain cultural lag in

the female half of the population, and deficiencies in cultural enlightenment work” (Snesarev, 1974, p. 226).

Beyond his ethnocentricity and diminishing the role of women as “preservers of survivals,” Snesarev (1974) explains that the cause of the survivals is the historically developed seclusion of women, based on “patriarchal-feudal family relationships and in the continual property-holding ideology of the male-half of the population” (p. 226). He suggests that scientific-atheist propaganda should be expanded through cultural enlightenment work; the new settlement of *kolkhozes* should be reinforced using medical stations with staff who will fight against any kind of survivals. Snesarev (1974) writes that “*elats*⁸⁰ have favourable conditions for preserving animistic survivals, magic, and the cults of ancestors and saints; it is precisely in them that the traditional wedding and funeral ceremonial is supported; they fetter the social and political activity of women and promote the retention of remnants of the property-holding ideology of men” (p. 233). Clearly, Snesarev acknowledges women’s practices but devalues women’s power and indigenous cultures; his scholarship is part of a larger process of cultural assimilation and erasure that is dehumanising and genocidal to people.⁸¹ Snesarev never consulted women themselves in developing his scholarship and drastic suggestions to policy makers.

In turn, female gatherings provide a space for meaning-making that enable members to construct, transform and maintain knowledge of the world. Women use the space to develop solidarity, trust, cooperation, and action in female circle groups.

⁸⁰ *Elat* [Uz.] is an administrative and territorial division of the village or city. In Uzbekistan this unit in Uzbek is usually referred as *mahalla* in official documents. In the dialect of Khorezm Uzbek, the unit is called *elot*.

⁸¹ There’s been writings on how women have preserved culture in the face of genocide. For example, “Homeplace as a site of resistance” by bell hooks (2008), *I, Rigoberta Menchu, An Indian woman in Guatemala* by Rigobeta Menchu (1983), *Women of the First Nations: Power, wisdom, and strength* by Christine Miller, Patricia Chuchryk, and Marie Smallface Maurle (2001), *Life stages and native women: Memory, teachings, and story medicine* by Kim Andersen (2011) among others.

Mavlud is one of the biggest and most significant of the all-female religious events practiced. It is an event to honour the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. The gatherings provide an alternative space for women to develop meaning of their social life in a new political and socio-economic context of social transformations. For example, in Turkey, *mavlud* focuses on female roles and values (Tapper, 1983). In the former Yugoslavia, *mavlud* functioned in women's lives at the background of the political tension accompanied by religious revival of the Orthodoxy of Bosnian Serbs, the Catholicism of Croats, and the Islam of Muslims. At a time when national identity was redefined, women who participated in *mavluds* did so in celebration of the end of socialist disapproval and partly in search of national/religious unity – to have some form of security and meaning in the situation of communist collapse. Even though these gatherings became a means of expressing of solidarity, they also became a place of conflicting views about Islam (Sorabji, 1995).

In Uzbekistan, the traditional female gathering, which is usually conducted at home by women, began to be practiced by men. Men turned *mavlud* into a public event by organizing it in the central mosque. Language, knowledge, and consequently power over knowledge is negotiated. As Kandiyoti and Azimova (2004) state, some kind of visible antagonism emerged between two opposing gendered styles of collective piety. Women's *mavlud* with its many customary or heterodox practices differs significantly from the new male public *mavlud* with its much stricter conformity to conventional Islamic norms and standards. These two types of expression of piety are more visible after 1991: men's Islam focusing on orthodox teachings and the mosque, and women carrying out heterodox practices. However, with the influence of foreign Islam, some modern *otins* and their students adopted an

orthodox version of Islam and started repressing traditional practices by criticising them.

Solidarity networks run by women of authority, *otin oyis*, demonstrate that informal relations elude not only male control but also state control due to the symbolic capital these women possess, which they use to reconstruct religious authority. The *otin*'s symbolic capital links to a genealogical relationship with saints, in cases where women are born to families which are seen as sacred (Fathi, 2007), or who become holy through an encounter with spirits in dreams. This sacredness enables women to have a particular mode of access to divine knowledge and power, enjoying the respect and recognition of women committed to the recovery of a traditional identity of Muslim selfhood. Some women became *otins*, as Sultanova (2000) explains because they are the descendants of *mullahs* and *qoris*⁸² who transmitted knowledge of the Qur'an via oral traditions, creating a chain of knowledge transmission between teacher and pupil, similar to the *murshid/murid*⁸³ relations that exist in Sufi orders (Sultanova, 2000). The role of these women is crucial in terms of empowering women to sustain social relations within community through the religious teachings of relationship with God.

Women of authority are invited to lead the *mavlud*, *zikir*,⁸⁴ and other gatherings to transform social space and re-Islamicize the population by changing the behaviour of women who are non-practicing, Russianized, or perceived as bad Muslims who were Sovietized. However, in post-Soviet times conflicting ideologies emerged among women who exercise religious authority between those who practice local traditional Islam and women who received new Islamic education. The modern religious women want to purify locally-practiced Islam according to their own

⁸² *Qoris* [Uz.] are legal preceptors.

⁸³ *Murshid/murid* [Ar.] is a spiritual guide and disciple.

⁸⁴ *Zikir* is a Sufi ritual to honour God with prayers, litanies, and poetry.

understanding of the religion largely adopted from Islamic movements in Central Asia. They call for returning to the origins of the Islamic community and to the birth of Islam. They are trying to persuade Muslims to stop practicing local practices and beliefs, to stop the veneration of holy tombs and the return of the souls of the deceased (Fathi, 2007). If women's religious practices such as *mavlud* exist on the edge of being heterodox or un-Islamic, their customary rituals such as *ziker*, and practices like wearing amulets are viewed by the new religious authority as superstitious and "beyond the pale of legitimacy" (Kandiyoti & Azimova, 2004, p. 340). In women's practice, traditional Islam with chanting of religious texts coexists with ancient mystical beliefs, such as shamanism and witchcraft.

Women in Central Asia visit *mazars* and holy places which possess sacred power. The cult of *mazars* existed before the spread of Islam. *Mazar* refers to a large diversity of structures, burial grounds, physical objects, trees, rocks, caves, hot springs, and waterfalls which are inhabited by the spirits of holy people. Graveyards and graves are important because local saints are buried there. Cemeteries are usually built around *mazars*; magnificent tombstones of the famous members of the community are built in cemeteries. The descendants of the deceased show respect to a deceased person by building a tomb of elaborate structure and organizing a proper funeral. Usually it is women who visit *mazars* as sacred places to fulfill their wishes such as recovery from illness, misfortune, or other problems. Cooking a meal, sacrificing sheep, or socialising with other women in *mazars* gives sanctity to the pilgrimage they perform. People differentiate *mazars* not only by their degree of power but also by the specific problems related to them. Some *mazars* help with infertility, others help to treat jaundice, or ear diseases, or rheumatism. Yet, the key

meaning of *mazars* is located in their power which is identified by the antiquity and the degree of sacredness (Poliakov, 1992).

Women's practices and beliefs form their knowledge, including their healing science which occupies an important place in their lives. Women's beliefs are manifested in female spirits (fertility, ancestor and hearth spirits) and female saints (Ambar-ona, Bibi-Seshanba, etc.) in combination with women's interest in amulets, pilgrimages to holy places, female vigils, and so on. These beliefs and practices were perceived by Snegarev (1974) as "women's religion" in relation to the gender segregation norms in Islam. Yet, gender segregation also empowered women (Tohtahodjaeva, 1996). Many young women received religious education in Qur'anic law and the classics, studied and taught Islamic law, and became healers and soothsayers. The rites of Bibi Seshanbe (Lady Tuesday) and Mushkul Kushod (Solver of Difficulties) may be executed together or separately (Rahmani, 2001). These rites are practised in times of difficulty such as illness in the family or inability to set up a daughter's marriage or as thanksgiving after the resolution of a problem such as the successful delivery of a child. Women believe that Bibi Seshanbe is a protector of women who can help them in their time of pain and suffering and better their lives.

In times when women experience difficulties in relationships with daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law, husbands, or other persons, *otins* and healers are consulted. The function of women of authority extends beyond the religious domain into the social space. They listen to women's concerns and try to defend their rights and contest patriarchal norms. Women of authority act as mediators, lawyers, counsellors, and healers. With the increase of economic difficulties, women of different social backgrounds ask healers to combat unemployment, poverty, and the sickness of their family members through invocation to God and prophet Muhammad, worship to

Islamic saints, incantations, sacrifices, propitiations, and calling to the spirits (Fathi, 2007). Through the *maslahats*⁸⁵ that relate to social matters of life and social behaviour, *otins* provide encouragement to those who migrated by giving *dua* (a voluntary prayer) and for those who did not migrate, but stayed at home in the country. In one *maslahat*, the *otin* appeals to believers not to lose faith in God and instead to discover happiness in their country in its current situation when a lot of people migrated to foreign countries:

Once, the Prophet was traveling from Mecca to Medina on a camel's back. He was invited to stay at many places but he insisted that he would stay at the place where his camel would stop. He said "where the camel would lie down, there is where I would stay too. Allah sent me here so I will be happy at any place where Allah wishes me to stay. I leave it to God to choose a place for me." We should accept and find happiness at the place where we are at. It is Allah's will for us to be here and now (Peshkova, 2006, p. 177).

Female gatherings are a site for mobilisation, the contestation of male and state power, and defining voice, agency and resistance of women towards oppression at multiple levels: personal, interpersonal, household, and state.

Conclusion

Narratives are predominant cognitive models of the existing knowledge that passes down from one generation to another. Knowledge is in continuous flux, subject to change due to different interpretations, agendas, and identity politics located in power relations among people, communities, and countries. The Soviet narrative history from the moment when "They came, They saw, They named, They claimed," to use Linda Smith's (1999, p. 80) phrase, demonstrates a common unifying official history of modernizing the allegedly backward people of Uzbekistan through the reconfiguration of everyday life practices. Foreign travelers, mainstream western, and many indigenous scholars used their western lenses, disregarding or misinterpreting

⁸⁵ *Maslahat* [Uz.] is a didactic story with moral teachings.

women's voices contributing to dehumanisation, power inequality, and unequal distribution of resources between the owners of the land and the minority group of Russians.

The destruction of indigenous peoples' culture began with the forced emancipation project of *Hujum* and Women's Committee's idea of liberating women from the chains of patriarchy and changing gender roles and identities. This Soviet project of women's emancipation resonated with *Jadids* and *qadimchis*⁸⁶ who criticized women for practicing Bibi Seshanbe, going to *mazars*, and using amulets. While women performed multiple tasks and possessed traditional and cultural knowledge of livelihood activities, neither *Jadids*, and *qadimchis*, nor Bolsheviks considered the value and centrality of women.

Despite the colonial women's emancipation project in Soviet times and the current socio-economic constraints, women developed multiple strategies to deal with economic situations, healing, community empowerment, and mobilisation. Women have been engaging in remaking the self in words and actions through interpreting, criticising, and speaking about their life experiences and choices they make. Women's cosmologies, rituals, and stories enable them to explore their Muslim identity, address unemployment, patriarchy, domestic violence, unemployment, and other social problems women face.

The post-Soviet deterioration of the socio-economic situation went along with land restructuring and transforming collective farms into cooperative enterprises (*shirkats*) and later on into private farms as the public sector of employment shrank. These socio-economic changes dramatically impacted gender relations, roles, and identities with transformative changes in livelihood activities and migration.

⁸⁶ *Qadimchi* [Uz]. is a person who adheres to the old ways of living.

(Tursunova, 2012b). Narratives of Uzbek women describe difficult situations beyond the rupture of social supports and economic infrastructures,⁸⁷ and growing problem of poverty for single and divorced women and rural migrants. Yet, they recast themselves and their livelihood activities by their ability to make strategic life choices that have an impact on empowerment, self-esteem, pride, and self-assertion.

I suggest that women's resilience is carried out in pursuing their own strategies and vision of their involvement in economic, cultural, and social life. In colonial and post-colonial times women did not distance themselves from the state and engaged in public and private structures to comply but also to resist, subvert, and pursue their own vision of self-governance and community empowerment. I recommend that peace and conflict resolution studies need to examine how traditional notions of collective resistance against oppressors can embrace individual and collective action, as well as compliance with state to maximise personal goals.

I argue that women's livelihoods even in oppressive situations, their subsistence economy, and observance of rituals, show how women have their vision of self-empowerment, healing, mobilisation, and peacebuilding. In these rapid socio-economic changes, female gatherings enable women to develop their discursive knowledge and discuss social issues such as unemployment, migration, and define their identity, roles, and actions.

⁸⁷ People who worked in the public sector in Soviet times had social benefits such as pension. The administration recorded employment history in the labour book in order to provide a pension in future.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LIVELIHOOD, EMPOWERMENT, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

Decollectivisation of state farms into private farms in post-Soviet times introduced new forms of social organization and diversification of livelihood strategies depending on ethnicity, gender, and age: 1) paid employment in public or private sectors, 2) agricultural work such as working in cotton and wheat fields, rice paddies in private farms and/or *tomorka* land, and household plots of land, 3) agricultural or non-agricultural trade, and 4) migration. Due to the seasonal migration of male workers, the feminisation of agriculture deepened (Kandiyoti, 1999b). Land restructuring and also the worsening socio-economic situation provoked women to migrate for waged labour and trade (Tursunova, 2012c).

Women's empowerment in Uzbekistan is part of the livelihood system that is vital in transforming resources into assets. Empowerment is defined as the capacity of persons or groups to make effective choices that lead to actions and desirable outcomes. Agency is defined as an actor's ability to make strategic choices, and to envisage and select from the available choices. Agency can be constrained by opportunity structures that influence actors' abilities to transform agency into action (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006) and thus to achieve tangible and intangible outcomes. In post-Soviet times, transforming women's agency into action requires negotiating access to various resources, envisioning the future, and interacting with power structures embedded in politics, markets, and culture.

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a theoretical framework to analyze rural livelihoods at the household level, situating them in socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental contexts by employing multidisciplinary approaches concerning: sustainable livelihood (SL), gender theory, and conflict resolution. The chapter consists of four sections: (1) sustainable livelihood, (2) empowerment, (3) conflict resolution, and (4) examining social changes and the implications for this study.

The first section begins by examining the SL approach to explore people's access to resources referred to as assets or capital. Subsequently, the section explores notions of access, control, and management at the household level and people's capabilities for transforming and mobilizing assets to develop livelihood activities and meet basic needs; and the ways in which people are able to diversify livelihood activities and expand them through social networks with the state and markets.

The section continues by looking at the gendered nature of migration as a rational act to gain economic profit. In some cases people decide to migrate in order to reject social norms, avoid patriarchy and inferior positioning, and escape from conflicts. Migration and other livelihood activities affect socio-economic transformation and may contribute to the increase of individual and household income and changing power structures, resource allocation, status, and the roles of women. This discussion is followed by examining access to material resources and knowledge in response to land tenure changes and rural reforms which are influenced by gender ideologies, identity, power, and age.

The second section begins by outlining an empowerment approach which examines the impact of livelihood activities on personal and community power, choice, agency, decision-making, and gender relations and identities at the micro

(household) and macro (community, national) levels. Empowerment consists of three elements: resources, agency, and achievements. Empowerment goes beyond access to resources and examines agency, the ability to determine one's goals and act upon them. Meaning, motivation, and the goals people bring are crucial to agency. Empowerment also explores how access to resources, when combined with agency, leads to desirable outcomes (Kabeer, 1999).

Next, the section explores "cooperative conflict" whereby household members bargain depending on their status or breakdown position, meaning their perceived interests and contributions. The outcome when parties did not succeed in co-operating and negotiating their interests may be called the breakdown position (A. Sen, 1987, 1990). The section continues by examining economic restructuring and determinants of empowerment in context-specific livelihood strategies in Uzbekistan.

The third section begins with conceptualizing conflict resolution, including indigenous conflict resolution based on methods for negotiating people's access to and utilization of resources, their exercise of agency, their voice, and their negotiation of power within a web of conflicts: such as, global markets and centre-periphery and local political dynamics. This development of conflict resolution approaches is followed by the examination of the ways the Independent government of Uzbekistan co-opted indigenous conflict resolution methods. Specifically, Uzbekistan's government co-opted the "women's question"⁸⁸ which continues to be a national ideology linked with motherhood. I also discuss indigenous conflict resolution methods such as *gap*, women's gatherings held by religious practitioners, *otins* – "women of authority." Similarly to James Scott (2009), I draw attention to examining

⁸⁸ The Soviet leaders were committed to women's liberation and placing women on equal terms with men in the economy, politics, and society. Simultaneously, the Soviets provided services to women to fulfill their role as mothers (Lubin, 1981). The Soviets considered any issues related to women such as employment, political participation, child care, and maternity leave as women's question. The Government of Uzbekistan continues to use the Soviet term "women's questions."

how women's resistance in Ok Yul contradicts the general perception of resistance as collective, organized, and benevolent.

The fourth section discusses implications for research and social change in Uzbekistan.

Chapter Thesis

The thesis of this chapter is that livelihood is a multidimensional process comprised of resources that a typical livelihood study might not consider as resources. The resources in question are not so much tangible wealth, but rather the holistic framework of indigenous people's ways of living, knowing, doing and taking action. These resources or elements of this holistic framework reflect indigenous peoples' ways of living, knowing, doing, and taking action. People's livelihood activities interact with systems and institutions located at *micro* (persons, households), *meso* (within societies such as community, city, and village), *macro* (states, nations), and *mega* (regions, civilizations) levels. Access to resources and livelihood outcomes are influenced by history, laws and regulations, demography, environment, trade, and market domains that may enhance and/or reduce people's choices and opportunities. The sustainability and vulnerability of livelihood is also subject to fault lines such as power, gender, ethnicity, race, age, generation, class, social status, marital status, household status, and location (e.g., rural vs. urban, centre vs. periphery).

Sustainable Livelihood Approaches

Livelihood consists of capabilities, assets,⁸⁹ and activities necessary for living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or improve its capabilities and assets both in the present and future while not

⁸⁹ Assets, resources, or capital is used interchangeably here to indicate what people possess and/or have access to and use to gain a livelihood.

depleting the natural resource base (Chambers, 1995; Chambers & Conway, 1992). A livelihood includes the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the livelihood activities, and the access to these assets affected by institutions and social relations that both influence the living achieved by the individual or household (Ellis, 2000). The five assets comprise: (1) *natural* (land, water, trees, etc.); (2) *physical* consisting of basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water, energy, communication); (3) *human* (labour power, skills, education, knowledge, health); (4) *economic/financial* (savings, income, credit, pensions, entitlements, remittances, stocks held in cash, bank deposits, liquid assets such as livestock and jewellery); and (5) *social* (social networks and relationship of trust) (Carney, 2002). Because women's community activities in Central Asia are significant in livelihood analysis, I also draw attention to *symbolic* (Bourdieu, 1977; Putnam, 1993) and *cultural* (language, rituals, stories, religion, spirituality, beliefs, norms, values, and symbols) capital which determine how persons and households construct their livelihood.

That is, the central elements of the SL framework consider (1) resources people have, (2) strategies they select and implement, and (3) the outcomes they pursue. SL also outlines livelihood in terms of a system which comprises the following components (Niehof & Price, 2001):

Inputs: resources and assets

Output: livelihood

Goals: livelihood adequacy to meet basic needs

Activities: livelihood production and the composition of the livelihood portfolio

Agency: attempts of households and persons to accomplish livelihood adequacy

Quality: degree of vulnerability or sustainability of the livelihood generated

Environment: context in which the livelihood system functions and interacts with other systems and institutions

Locus: the household as place of livelihood production

Niehof and Price (2001) refer to agency as structured actions such as acquiring, using, and managing assets and resources. The SL approach does not question issues related to equity, equality, social justice, and peace. It lacks the perspectives of both feminism and peace and conflict studies.

Central to the SL framework is an understanding of the ways in which institutions and ideologies influence access to resources and determine the strategy options and composition of a livelihood portfolio (Scoones, 1998). The quality of a livelihood system functions at two extremes of a continuum, *sustainability* and *vulnerability*. Sustainability is defined as the ability to cope with and recover from stresses and shocks while maintaining or improving capabilities and assets (Chambers & Conway, 1992). Individuals and households with a vulnerable livelihood system lack assets and capabilities to create and/or access assets. They cannot cope with economic, natural, and human health shocks; the seasonality of prices; and conflicts over scarce resources. Consequently they experience food insecurity, and are often in debt (Chambers, 1989; Davies, 1996). In livelihood analysis, the notion of sustainability is complex and ambitious as increased income does not necessarily result in gender equity among household members, and inequity cannot be sustainable as disempowered members may seek change or further lose power.

Poverty and vulnerability are often associated with over-reliance on agriculture (Ellis & Allison, 2004). In 2000-2001, in the Karakalpakistan and Khorezm regions in Uzbekistan, drought led to food insecurity and livelihood collapse. About 90 percent of the rice crop and 75 percent of the cotton crop were lost and many households in the rural communities struggled to survive (ADB, 2002). Yet, household income can increase through non-farm and often non-rural activities. Migration, mobility, flexibility, and adaptability can lead to improving rural

livelihoods. Land tenure and other natural resource management institutions have various and multifaceted effects in limiting or increasing the vulnerability of households, and in enabling or disabling virtuous spirals⁹⁰ of asset accumulation that can help families to overcome poverty (Ellis & Allison, 2004). Sustainable households can avert the risks, recover, and respond in times of crisis.

Livelihood diversification is a vital strategy for reducing livelihood vulnerability to avert the risks associated with poverty. Diversification may also relate to success at achieving livelihood security to enhance economic conditions (Ellis, 1998). Diversification is defined as the “process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living” (Ellis, 2000, p. 15). Thus, diversification can be associated with survival and accumulation strategies.

The ability of households to diversify their livelihood portfolio, to access resources, and to negotiate their well-being is determined by several “mediating factors” (Ellis, 2000), some predetermined by contextual constraints and opportunities, and by policy setting (history, politics, macroeconomic conditions, trade, climate, agro-ecology, demography, and social differentiation) (Scoones, 1998). In the livelihood approach, resources are regarded as “assets” or “capital” (Ellis & Allison, 2004). The abilities of households to avoid or decrease vulnerability depends not only on available assets, but also on their ability to transform those assets into income, food, or other basic needs. Assets can be transformed through the intensification of existing strategies and the development of new diversified activities. The effectiveness of asset use and the selection of strategies to cope with stress are

⁹⁰ Economic growth can be considered as a virtuous circle. A virtuous circle leads to favourable outcomes, while a vicious circle has negative outcomes. A virtuous circle can change into a vicious circle when negative feedback is not taken into account. Wealthy households are characterized by virtuous spirals of accumulation which include on-farm and non-farm employment. These households possess diverse livestock (Ellis & Freeman, 2004).

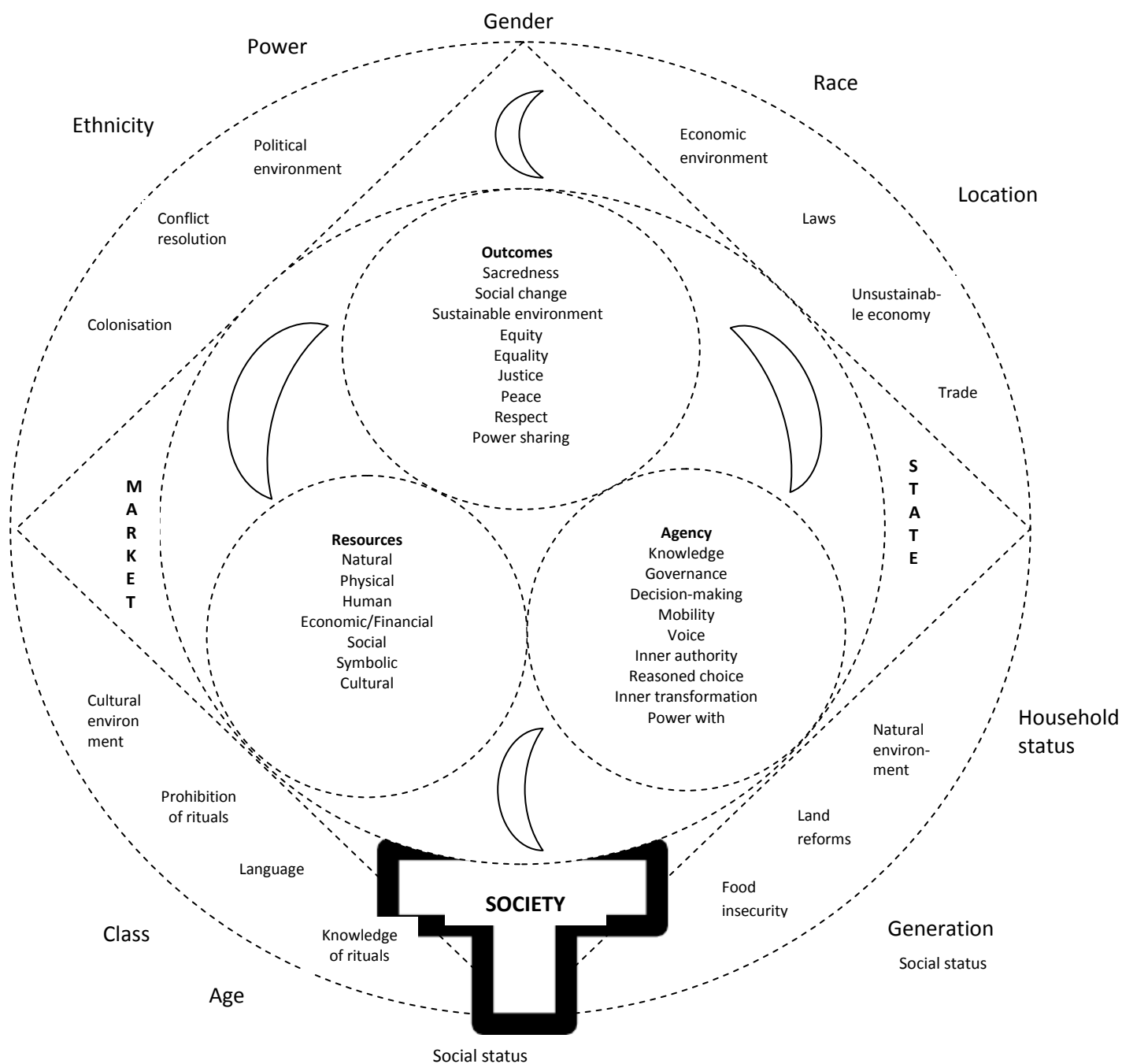
dependent on household, intra-household, and community factors. Life cycle events such as birth, death, and marriage can impinge on people's ability to respond to exterior changes. Household asymmetries of gender and age impact the ability to cope with economic stress (Moser, 1996).

People's access to resources, their agency, and livelihood outcomes are influenced by history, laws and regulations, demography, environment, trade, and market domains that may enhance and/or reduce people's choices and opportunities. The sustainability and vulnerability of livelihood is also subject to fault lines such as power, gender, ethnicity, race, age, generation, class, social status, marital status, household status, and location (e.g., rural vs. urban, center periphery). The possible outputs of livelihood framework can be social change, equality, justice, peace, sacredness, sustainable environment, well-being, respect, and empowerment.

Ellis (2000) identifies livelihood diversification in rural development as the process by which households build an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets with the aim to survive and improve their living standards. He specifies the significance of on-farm diversification to reduce vulnerability in the face of unsustainable or diminishing opportunities in national or international markets, and the inclusion of off-farm activities in rural areas. Household livelihood diversification is defined as multiple sources of income such as combining full-time farming with wage employment. Susanna Devies (1996) distinguishes between diversification for strategies that are forced by the need for survival, and those that are the outcome of choice. Ellis (2000) and Hart (1994) point out that diversification as a survival strategy develops as a result of involuntary and desperate reasons such as poverty, lack of assets, illnesses, vulnerability, and disaster. In contrast, diversification as a matter of choice and opportunity relates to voluntary and proactive reasons to

diversify and consequently enhance well-being. “Diversification for accumulation” is distinct from “diversification for survival” (Hart, 1994).

Figure 1. Livelihood Resilience/Agency Wheel
Zulfiya Tursunova



Moon symbol at the top of the circle represents women. Material, spiritual, political, natural, cultural, and economic environment mutually influence each other and influence individuals, households, *mahallas* (communities), cities, regions, and countries across the globe. The place symbolises sacredness.

Gendered Household: Access, Control and Management

During the transition from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy, gender-based intra-household inequalities and household organizations are the fundamental elements in the negotiation of access to resources and their control in enhancing one's livelihood. Access to resources provides persons with the capability to build their livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999). Amartya Sen's (1997) capabilities approach stresses the possession of forms of capital not just as a means of production, but also as meaningful citizen engagement in political and social life, and in the on-going re-creation of society. Assets are not only "things that allow survival, adaptation and poverty alleviation: they are also the basis of agents' power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources" (Bebbington, 1999, p. 2022). Consequently, access to assets has implications for production, values, and meaningful interaction with social structures, and empowerment to change the status quo.

People need adaptive livelihood strategies in order to respond to the continuous economic and political changes after the independence of Central Asian countries in 1991 (Chambers, 1983, 1997; Ellis & Allison, 2004). Access differs from control and management; *access* refers to the opportunities to use resources without having the power to directly decide the production/output and the exploitation method (Muyoyeta & Simwanza, 2003). *Control* involves direct ownership and authority to the use and output of resources (Muyoyeta & Simwanza, 2003). Control over income shows who makes decisions in regard to intra-household resources and who benefits from them (Pahl, 1989). *Management* relates to the implementation of tasks by household members without their involvement into decision-making (Pahl, 1989). Men and women's unequal access to the control of resources and property rights may

result in poor management and jeopardize the food security and well-being of rural families (Agarwal, 1994a).

Rural livelihoods in Uzbekistan include participation in subsistence production, waged labour in the public and private sectors, and self-employment in the informal economy. Livelihood analysis requires gender lenses and examination of other social factors such as age, generation, ethnicity, class, but also place and time, that are usually overlooked by researchers (Whitehead & Kabeer, 2001). Furthermore, gendered livelihood strategies analysis allows the researcher to understand the activities individuals apply to secure livelihoods, and to understand women's agency to negotiate constraints and opportunities (Arjan De Haan, Drinkwater, Rakodi, & Westley, 2002). Negotiation involves manoeuvring, dealing, coping, and bargaining among households, with the community, and with markets. These connections may be determined through ownership and norms of access and control, or through community organizations and market interrelationships. Interactions with the institutions and markets can generate expropriation or accumulation outcomes (A. E. Ferguson, 1992).

The strength of the SL framework in its applicability to the Central Asian context relates to the fact that its analysis is also grounded in the influence of macro-level policy and institutions over livelihood options and outcomes (Carney, 2002). Furthermore, the SL framework has been widely used in developing countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, Bolivia, Malawi, and Kenya (Ashley & Carney, 1999), as well as in post-socialist space in Russia (Francine & Anne, 2003), Slovakia (Gejza, 2003), and Kyrgyzstan (Shigalieva, Kollmair, Niederer, & Maselli, 2007) that demonstrated a diversity of adaptive livelihood strategies and migration patterns situated in a local context. A valuable aspect of SL is that it draws attention to migration and increases

understanding of the diverse ways in which people combine different sources of livelihood (Arjaan De Haan, 2000).

Migration

Migration from rural to urban areas is a rational act of individual choice often for economic gain because of paid wage differentials and expected employment opportunities (Todaro, 1969). By drawing on Michael Todaro's model, Oded Stark (1991) stressed households rather than individuals and remittances in the form of intertemporal contract bargaining⁹¹ between the migrant worker and the family. Terry McGee (1982), Jan Breman (1985), Oded Stark, and David Levhari (1980; 1982), drawing on Marxist and structuralist viewpoints, pointed out the limitations of the political and economic nature of capitalist markets whereby migration is embedded in dependency relations, coercion, and control of the labour force. Migration is also often not a choice for the vulnerable, but may be their only alternative for survival after separation from the land and/or the lack of non-agricultural opportunities. The new wave of structuration theory underlines the need to incorporate both migrants' agency and structural relations that force migration choices (Wright, 1995).

Scholars examining the role of gender in migration drew attention to the gendered nature of motives for migration, the gender discrimination faced by migrant workers, and the gendered nature of spending remittances (Chant & Radcliffe, 1992; Sinclair, 1998). Sylvia Chant and Sarah Radcliffe (1992) highlight the gender aspects of decision-making, division of productive and reproductive labour within households, and also the cultural and ideological restraints on female mobility. Sarah

⁹¹ Migration decisions are taken by the migrant and the family. The parties decide on costs and returns (for example, remittances), and their distribution among household members. The distribution of remittances is defined as intertemporal contractual arrangement between parties. This type of contract reflects the bargaining power of the household members (Stark, 1985).

Whatmore (1994) emphasises gender and generational aspects of power relations, and examines the contradictions in meeting people's needs.

Migration has also been viewed as an act of transformation and liberation, brought on by the rejection of prevailing social norms and constraints. That is, it can be an act of resistance produced by the wish to leave an unhealthy social environment or an inferior position. Migration can be motivated by a search for a better life, modernization, and progress (Ni Laoire, 1999). In the Khorezm region, women also migrate to avoid oppression by men, and to find income-generating activities, especially in cases of the death, unemployment, or sickness of their husbands. The causes of their migration also relate to low income and to the ecological disaster of the Aral Sea. For example, many families left their homes in the areas close to the Aral Sea because of the environmental disaster and moved to the cities in Uzbekistan (Tursunova, 2012c).

Access to Resources

Since post-Independence, land privatisation – that is, the restructuring of *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses* into private farms – has been carried out on the scale of destructive transformation rather than the improvement of conditions (Trevisani, 2007b) with state actors trying to achieve control over resources and ideological production (Ilkhamov, 2007; Kandiyoti, 2007). The decollectivization of agriculture has not been transparent: rural elites who used to work in former *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses* were able, through personal networks, to access land with better quality to establish their farms, leaving many poorer existing and potential farmers out of the competition. Rural households had difficulties receiving *tomorka* land and those with personal connections were more likely to obtain private plots of land (*dehqon* farms)

(Babajanian, 2006). In addition to customary entitlements to land that favour men, women's dependence on land for self-subsistence intensified.

Deniz Kandiyoti (2003a) reports that the "cry for land" among rural women in Uzbekistan is stunning. Women experience job losses in agricultural and non-farm occupations at the same time as demand for their labour on family leaseholdings, as unpaid or casual workers, is rising. Women's access to land seems weak because access is maintained through membership in enterprises from which they are excluded, or through leasehold markets which also marginalize them. Moreover, decollectivization also entails repercussions for social organization and the livelihood strategies of rural communities. Decollectivization was accompanied by social inequality, reduced state capacity to provide social safety, and reinforcement of social stratification. As a result, the process advanced the creation of an impoverished proletariat struggling to achieve self-subsistence and also a new class of economically viable farmers (Trevisani, 2007b). Therefore, it is important to examine, from a gender dimension, livelihood strategies in response to land tenure changes and rural reforms in post-Soviet times. Specifically, it would be important to draw attention to the creation of social capital, which provides safety nets. Social capital is accumulated through community, professional and personal networks, and kinship. The accumulation of social capital may be at the cost of others' social exclusion and misery.

Foreign scholars have gained important insights on male farming activities conducted by rural or urban elites (Trevisani, 2007a, 2007b; Wall, 2008a, 2008b), but almost no research has been conducted on female farming activities in Uzbekistan. Many women are invisible farmers because their connection to farming is created by entry through marriage, and by their position within the farm family. Women's status

has an effect not only on interpersonal relations within the family, but also on women's role in the public sphere. Women are under-represented in farming politics, organizations, and training programmes (Sachs, 1983). When women take the role of farmer they transgress gender identities on farms, which dictate traditional identities of women as farmwives, and men as farmers. These gender ideologies interconnect with hierarchical spaces in agriculture and the community which involve the subordinate behaviour of women (Trauger, 2004).

Recognizing power relations is central in understanding the position of farm women. Power is linked to property. Property, or land, is not only an economic resource that creates the prestige of ownership; control of land also provides access to other resources such as agricultural knowledge, organizational and ideological resources, and political affiliations (Shortall, 1999). Taking into account customary inheritance rules and gender ideology in Uzbekistan, it is important to examine who are female farmers in terms of their professional background, education, age, and household status. Do they run a farm themselves or jointly with husbands? To whom does the farm belong? What are their entry points into farming? Do they own property? How is gender ideology constructed and how do women perceive their identity? How do women's power and power relations enable access to resources (land, credits, and fertilizer), control of resources, agenda, and decision-making?

Male farmers mostly stressed the lack of other alternatives as a reason for their engagement in farming activities in Uzbekistan (Trevisani, 2007b). The study conducted by Bock (2004) on Dutch farmwomen showed that they followed similar goals; they pursued farming activities to generate extra income and to develop their private entrepreneurship. Few women laboured for social relations and fulfillment. Gender-specific restrictions that limit access to resources such as money and

knowledge motivated women to invest little and run their farm on a small scale, which differs from what Cliff (1998) suggests is a masculine approach, oriented toward growth and profit-maximization (Cited in Bock, 2004).

Bock does not critique the traditional division of labour and gender ideology in the Netherlands, but suggests that Dutch farmwomen developed a strategy not only to cope with limitations and lack of resources, but also to achieve multiple goals that motivate them in a positive way: being an entrepreneur, a mother, and a farm wife. Likewise, understanding the gender specifics of farming in transition economies sheds more light on the motives of female farmers, what resources and assets they have, what strategies they pursue, and the outcomes they achieve. Examining issues of cooperation, networking, and the moral dimension of entrepreneurship as trust and sharing in the use of resources will help to understand how women establish and manage their livelihood activities, how they conceive their livelihood activities, how their strategies differ from men's, and how such differences could be explained.

One of the most important resources of livelihood is knowledge. Batliwala (1993) suggests that those who control knowledge, material resources, and ideology have power and administer public and private life, and certainly are in a situation to make decisions which benefit them. In describing silkworm production in Uzbekistan, Caleb Wall (2006) identifies women as masters of knowledge and passing knowledge to other women within the household. Wall (2006) points out that this mastery is culturally grounded and suggests that women are not recognized by the community members as masters. Women demonstrate much knowledge and perform much work in preparation for growing silk cocoons: laying out paper and larvae to start raising silkworms, the spreading out of worms as they develop, feeding them three or four times a day, deciding when to harvest cocoons, separating cocoons from wood, and

cleaning cocoons for sale to the state. Male activities include purchasing the larvae from the factory, the construction of beds for silkworms, cutting mulberry trees with other family members, and at the end selling cocoons back to the factory. A clear gender division of labour is observed in silk production activity. However, not much is known about how gender roles inform livelihood strategies. Thus, I explore the women's development of knowledge and how this knowledge impacts transformation of gender roles in rural areas in Uzbekistan.

Frank Ellis (2000) suggests that access to assets (natural, physical, financial, social, and human) is mediated by social institutions and social relations. Trevisani (2007b) points out that paternalistic provision of services by the *kolkhozes* is bestowed upon the existing farmers who are expected to provide voluntary services to community. For example, in the Yangibozor district the farmers had to repair school buildings and enlarge the hospital as part of their voluntary services because the government was short of funds. These indigenous voluntary services are called *hashar* or *khayriya*⁹² that wealthy people normally provide to the community. However, in the case of farming practices the state co-opted indigenous practices of *hashar* and *khariya*, and urged farmers to provide community services.

In exploring the interaction of the state with communal modes of interaction in Uzbekistan, Johan Rasanaygam (2002) points out that state institutions can also be integrated into the local systems of value not as external actors but as participating actors, contrary to dual economy models that make a clear division between formal and informal sectors, the public and private. In-depth livelihood analysis will require examination of the ways in which the state, the community, and farmers interact and

⁹² *Hashar* is voluntary community labour, usually provided by all people regardless of their wealth. It is normally men who participate in *hashar*, for example, to build a house, clean streets, dig *ariks* (ditches), or do any other community work. *Hashar* is used when discussing men's jobs, but is not used for the kinds of voluntary community work women do, like cooking for life cycle events. *Khariya* is financial assistance to the needy provided by wealthy women and men.

determine access to resources and impact the strategy choices of female farmers. In particular, it would be important to have a holistic approach to analyze the interaction of farmers with communal practices of mobilisation based on rituals, reciprocity, exchange of labour, and products. This holistic approach will enable a researcher to examine socio-economic changes which are shaped by culture, gender ideology, policies, environment, and local and global markets.

This analysis seeks to draw attention to the symbolic dimensions of livelihoods that relate to power and political agendas by examining the interaction of rituals and the transformation of indigenous knowledge. For instance, the tradition of blessing the crops with Islamic sayings existed before Communism. Caleb Wall (2006) argues that when elders bless state-ordered cotton and wheat crops, this tradition has been co-opted or adapted. Similarly, the post-Independence tradition of using machinery to plant the first seeds under the supervision of the elders demonstrates how the state's actions integrate ancient traditions to meet state goals. These practices demonstrate ways in which different knowledge systems mix and the political power of the state is reinforced. Power, knowledge, and culture are embedded in rituals and symbolism interlinked with livelihoods. Because livelihood can disempower or empower social change, it is vital to analyze how local knowledge, culture, and power come into play in livelihood from gender perspectives.

Conceptualizing Empowerment

The empowerment of women is not just a women's issue, but is a gender issue which involves a reconsideration of gender relations and the socially constructed idea of what it means to be a man or a woman. Poverty affects women and men differently based on their age, race, ethnicity, education, and skills. Disparities between sexes are shown in access to resources and opportunities, especially among the poor. Gender

inequalities intensify poverty and contribute to gender disparities (NZAID, 2007).

Empowerment is also a development issue because women who become empowered to act in a public setting take an active role not only in economic activity, but in exerting pressure for change in multiple ways (Rowlands, 1997).

Central to the idea of empowerment is the notion of influence. To empower means to enable an individual to develop her ability to exercise *power to* – that is, to achieve goals to transform or to change the world to be a more equitable place (Wolf, 1998). In advancing the notion of empowerment, Sirlatha Batliwala (1994) stresses the importance of maintaining the transformative character of empowerment to deal with poverty reduction, welfare, and community participation. Empowerment is the process by which marginalized women gain control over the circumstances of their lives and execute control over material assets, intellectual resources, and ideology. Batliwala (1994) views empowerment as the “process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power” (p. 130).

People create their livelihoods through the ability of households, groups, and communities to negotiate among themselves, other actors, and markets. Negotiation methods rely upon manoeuvring, dealing, coping, and bargaining (A. E. Ferguson, 1992); negotiation always involves power relations (Kolb, 2000). Scholars of power make a distinction that *power over* is a “win/lose,” “either/or,” or “zero-sum” game (K. Boulding, 1989; Galtung, 2004) expressed in domination of one group over another, enforced not only through rules and commands, but also negative and positive sanctions. When people are willing to trade autonomy for economic security, their compliance is achieved to protect the status quo from the perceived threats of enemies (Burton, 1990). Power over is also internalized, and, as Johan Galtung (1996) compellingly argues, institutionalized as structural and cultural violence by the

imposition of attitudes and norms of behaviour that cause contradiction, a conflict between incompatible goals and interests of parties. Power over is embedded in relationships between and among human beings and is the ability to influence or control other people through destructive social relationship (Habermas, 1976).

Yet people also resist such power. *Power to* implies the opportunity to act freely through power sharing and *power from* suggests the ability to resist the power of others by effectively responding to their unwanted demands (Hollander & Offerman, 1990). Personal and political transformations and active participation in democracy are central to empowerment. Empowerment is built on attitudes such as self-esteem and self-efficacy and capabilities such as knowledge/skills and political awareness. Empowerment involves social and political participation of individuals at the community level. People are motivated by the pursuit of human needs in the process of empowerment. Human values such as social justice, freedom, diversity, and equality give meaning to empowerment for all people who are involved in the process (Schwerin, 1995).

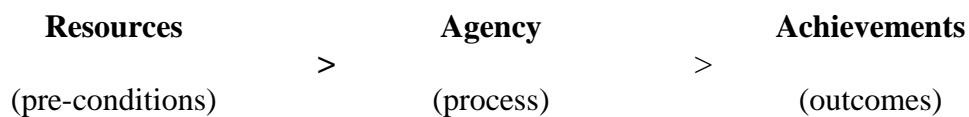
Empowerment involves interplay between human agency and structure; an individual actor and their actions are linked to the social structure through human agency embedded in social practice, leading to social structural change. Social space is reproduced or redefined through social practices ordered across time and space. The human action and interaction draws on and reproduces the rules and resources used in production and reproduction of social actions, and they are at the same time the means of system reproduction (the duality of structure) where social structural models of power and space are constructed by and determine the actor's social actions. In this context, the use of power features not a particular type of behaviour but all action, and power is not by itself a resource (Bourdieu, 1990).

In her new subaltern theory of practice, Sherry Ortner (1996) suggests to shift the focus from totalizing structures to a concept of “serious games,” that is, loosening up our understanding of structures. She explains: “If we take the methodological unit of practice as the game, rather than the ‘agent,’ we can never lose sight of the mutual determination(s) of agents and structures: of the fact that players are [as] ‘agents,’ skilled and intense strategizers who constantly stretch the game even as they enact it, and the simultaneous fact that players are defined and constructed (though never wholly contained) by the game” (pp. 19-20). Individuals are influenced by structures, yet they can subvert structures to pursue their own goals.

Negotiation of power within a household is influenced by other factors as well. Development researchers argue that the calculation of household income, per capita income, and per capita food consumption does not measure the distribution of income within the household (Brock-Utne, 1997; Phipps & Burton, 1995; A. Sen, 2004). Amartya Sen (2004) advocates a capabilities approach which concentrates on the measurement of the capabilities of an individual rather than on the measurement of the household income. Christine Koggel (2004), who drew on Sen’s theories of development, considers that “measuring women’s increased participation in the workplace does not give us the whole story about the effect on their well-being or agency. We need to take account of the many barriers to women’s freedom and agency, even when their participation in the workforce is permitted or increased, by examining not only the global context, but also the embeddedness of women’s work in localized social practices and political institutions” (p.186). As families are a unit of production for farms, corporations, and financial institutions (banks), the gender dimension of the labour division and women’s choice needs to be examined.

Corporate executives and financial organizations are practically driven to achieve increasing profit margins, not by enhancing women’s labour force participation or their freedom and agency for its own sake. The drive to minimize costs ensures that the majority of women are employed for particular types of jobs and it does not mean that these women have choices that change their exercise of freedom (Mohanty, 1988). These structural types of violence suppress women’s empowerment and sense of agency.

To assess empowerment, feminist scholars have examined increase of self-reliance, assertion to make independent choices, and control over resources (Elson, 1991; Kabeer, 1994).⁹³ For my research, I use Naila Kabeer’s (2001b) definition of empowerment which is built on the expansion of people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. The ability to implement strategic life choices consists of three elements:



Kabeer (1999) stresses the importance of social relations in the family, market, state, community, and other various institutional domains that are necessary for obtaining resources. Like Jeremy Swift (2006), Kabeer (1999) suggests that assets are comprised of investments, stores, and claims. She argues that obtained resources acquire the form of not only actual allocations, but also of future claims and

⁹³ Several scholars define empowerment in terms of informed choice to expand access to information, knowledge and analysis (Batliwala, 1993); and gender, power, and governance (Afshar, 1998; Djabari, 1998; Maccaulay, 1998; Parpart, 2004). Empowerment relates to control over power structures to change them (Johnson, 1992); women’s autonomy (Jejeebhoy, 2000); individual change and collective action (Young, 1993); and mobility (Davin, 1998). These scholars stress “inner-transformation” as a key idea in the formulation of self-interest, needs, and choices in the empowerment process (Kabeer, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000; Rowlands, 1998).

expectations, where access is gained through rules and norms of distribution and exchange.

The second element of empowerment, agency, relates to the ability to identify one's goals and act upon them. Agency includes meaning, motivation, and goals that persons bring to their activity – that is, *power within*. Agency is exercised by bargaining, negotiating, deceiving, manipulating, subverting, resisting, reflecting, and analyzing. Thus, I argue that agency relates to the methods of conflict resolution embedded in livelihood that encompass a wide range of approaches: conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacemaking, negotiation, enquiry, arbitration, judicial settlement, reconciliation, and traditional methods of conflict resolution.

The third element of empowerment, achievements, depends highly on the access to resources, but access does not necessarily lead to an individual's desired outcomes. For example, access to micro-credits or jobs can be viewed as a sign of empowerment but does not lead necessarily to positive outcomes such as participation in decision-making, control of family size, or the use of contraceptives (Kabeer, 1999).

Limited access to resources tends to restrict the engagement of women into income-generating activities and also their exercise of agency, control, and decision-making within the household and community. Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) identify *gender-specific*, *gender-intensified*, and *imposed gender* constraints that reduce the involvement of women in livelihood activities. *Gender-specific* constraints are expressed in the division of domestic labour, with women performing domestic work and child rearing. Cultural norms that restrict women's mobility or engagement in particular activities tend to focus on female seclusion and reproductive roles that

reduce women's ability to generate income. *Gender-intensified* constraints refer to the asymmetrical distribution of resources between male and female members of the household, for example, access to resources and property. *Gender imposed* constraints are reflected in gender-biased practices in providing public resources such as credits, education, health, employment opportunities, and income. These types of discrimination increase intra-household asymmetries, and increase power, privilege, and entitlement associated with masculinity.

“Cooperative Conflict” and Empowerment in the Household

Women's engagement in income-generating activities, their empowerment to enhance their position in their household, and their ability to diversify livelihood activities depend on the nature of intra-household decision-making processes, the size and composition of the family, seasonality, differentiated labour markets, risk strategies, coping behaviour, credit market imperfections, and intertemporal savings, investment, and social capital. Sen's (1990) “cooperative conflict” model draws attention to contractual relations and bargaining in the decision making process that goes beyond the traditional domain of neo-classical models of the household. He argues that family members are in the process of cooperative conflict to gain benefits in the allocation of resources. The bargaining and therefore the allocation of resources depend on bargaining members' features.⁹⁴

Cooperation in households is sustained as long as combining their efforts benefits them more by providing for their needs and interests than if there was a breakdown of cooperation. A breakdown is the level at which one is stopped in bargaining. A breakdown in cooperation indicates which household member is less

⁹⁴ The bargaining of a cooperative conflict consists of: (1) their status quo or breakdown position, (2) perceived interests, and (3) perceived contributions to resources (Sen, 1990).

capable of securing a favourable bargaining outcome. For example, a person with low bargaining power may decide to withdraw from social networks and/or livelihood activities. Sen believes that a household member who is perceived to be making a bigger contribution to the household enjoys a greater bargaining power.

Kabeer (1999) advances Sen's point by stating that women's own perceptions of their value were decisive to their sense of empowerment and their perceived value by other family members. Those scholars in the resource bargaining school argue that increased income earnings offer women a stronger bargaining tool to negotiate power relations and receive more equitable sharing in decision making (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Rogers & DeBoer, 2001) and the domestic chores within the household (Booth, Johnson, White, & Edwards, 1984). On the other hand, those scholars in the gender ideology school argues that women's paid employment does not necessarily lead to the renegotiation of domestic life or childcare (Morris, 1990).

Economic Restructuring, Empowerment, and its Determinants

Empowerment entails the process of change from a condition of disempowerment to making choices of transformatory significance that challenge and destabilize social injustices and inequality in the society (Kabeer, 1999). In his research, Trevisani (2007a) reports how Bozorboy, a small scale farmer, succeeded in turning the cropping system of his farm from cotton and grain into poultry, successfully resisting and suspending state orders to produce cotton. Due to his subterfuge, Bozorboy also received legal permission to turn his cropping scheme into 10 hectares of rice.⁹⁵ He asked the administration to certify that his land plot was not

⁹⁵ Many farmers plant rice (cash crop) illegally and the local administration closes its eyes to this practice. Growing rice in Khorezm is unsustainable environmentally because it requires lots of water and also increases soil salinity. More importantly, the government is interested in having farmers grow cotton so they can get foreign revenues rather than in enabling farmers to grow rice for their own benefit. Rice is not a state-ordered crop.

acceptable for cotton cultivation. As a result, he became one of the few farmers in the district who was legally exempted from the rice ban. He helped the *rais*⁹⁶ to deal with legal cases against farmers, and used his social network power to improve his farming.

Bozorboy represents the transitory model of agency best adapted to the scenario emerging from Yangibozor: a new market of ‘political’ protection around the conditions of farming, in which, besides capital, agricultural knowledge, or access to markets, successful entrepreneurial skills have to take power into account. [...] Bozorboy’s is not a loyalty dilemma, but rather a strategic switching of conformity to and subversion of the rules of officialdom, an attitude which he sees legitimated by the perceived insecurity of his personal future. Like Weber’s political entrepreneur Bozorboy has everything to gain (or to lose) from ‘politics.’ As an individually driven manager/manipulator of the political conditions around farming it is maybe to this role that he comes closest (Trevisani, 2007a, p. 100).

The farmer was able to transform assets to resources by making necessary strategic transformatory choices, and he gained some power in the face of powerful political and economic state institutions to achieve his goals and increase his well-being (Trevisani, 2007a). Consequently, planting rice, a cash crop, can improve his well-being. The process of empowerment of the manager/manipulator was shown in *power from*, his ability to resist the power of others by effectively responding to their unwanted demands (Hollander & Offerman, 1990). Yet, his empowerment was not so much expressed in *power to* or *with* community because he did not help farmers to win the case against the *rais* who was enforcing state ordered policies. Bozorboy did not enable others to act together and also achieve a change of policies.

The feminist understanding of *power over* draws on the idea of the dynamics of oppression and internalized oppression. Empowerment is not merely involvement in decision-making but also entails the processes that lead people to consider themselves capable and entitled to make decisions. The feminist interpretation of

⁹⁶ *Rais* [Uz.] is a chairperson of a village.

empowerment is built on *power to* and *power within* (Rowlands, 1997). Can *power over* as *power from* and *to* empower women to gain control over resources and power structures and gain voice? Feminist scholars (Young, 1993) emphasize both individual change and collective action in women's empowerment. Development scholars doing research in Uzbekistan come with the assumption that people should be engaged in collective action to resist state-ordered crops instead of pursuing their own interest. To understand the processes of power dynamics and empowerment among female farmers, traders, and migrant women, I examined women's choices, power, voice, control, and management of livelihood.

Kabeer (1999) indicates that accessing credits or waged employment in Bangladesh increased women's voice within the household. However, issues of control over resources took place among household members. Osmani (1998) demonstrates that access to credit from the Grameen Bank allowed female borrowers to gain more autonomy in decision-making in such spheres as spending money and making reproductive decisions.

An examination of micro-credit programs in the Andijan⁹⁷ and Kashkadarya⁹⁸ provinces in Uzbekistan revealed that the patterns of entrepreneurial choices as a result of accessing loans shows a strong preference for activities which are dominated by men even though the micro-credit scheme was targeted for women. Women used loans for less risky activities run by men such as cattle-trading and selling meat. Women chose investing in the activities of their male family members, taking into account the corporate nature of Uzbek households and the higher profits of men's activities. The consequences of these choices for women's empowerment are also

⁹⁷ Andijan is one of the most densely inhabited provinces of the Fergana Valley where a sedentary lifestyle and irrigated farming was long practiced, and where collectivization took place at an early stage of the Soviet period (Kandiyoti, 1999b).

⁹⁸ Kashkadarya is more sparsely inhabited region where sedentarisation and collectivization have a more recent history and where dry farming and animal husbandry prevail (Kandiyoti, 1999b).

affected by complex life cycle events; older women in positions of authority may consider more managerial roles in decision-making while the more junior women may become unofficial workers in their husband's enterprise.

Located in the rural fertile Fergana Valley, Andijan's economy concentrates on growing cotton, rice, fruits, and vegetables. Unlike Andijan, Kashkadarya is situated in a semi-arid area with significant water shortage problems. As a result, the economy of a household is based on dry farming and animal husbandry. Women's engagement in livelihood activities varies across the two regions with a greater participation in agricultural and off-farm activities in Andijan and a higher number of unemployed in Kashkadarya. Even though women in Kashkadarya have handicraft knowledge and skills in carpet making, their income generation is low (Kandiyoti, 1999b). Limited income-generating opportunities for women and low market prices harm women's well-being and security.

An examination of the domestic unit in Uzbekistan shows that older women have more mobility, more time for social activities, and greater access to household resources than young women. This means that intergenerational discrepancies may arise in the division of labour. The distribution of rewards from the micro-credit projects depend on the age and status within the household. Since some of the disputes about labour relations happen between women of different generations, micro-projects that do not consider the higher domestic and reproductive workloads of younger woman may harm the health and well-being of junior and weaker members (Kandiyoti, 1999b).

Taking into account seasonal variations of workload is important in providing subsidies. Women in rural regions or farming economies have a high workload in spring and summer and are unemployed in the winter (Kandiyoti, 1999b). Kandiyoti

(1999b) reflects that microfinance projects carried out in Andijan and Kashkadarya in Uzbekistan increased income and provided employment to the growing numbers of unemployed and underemployed women. However, their effect on empowerment is likely to differ among diverse categories of women.

Life cycle effects and variations in the types of interdependencies between genders play a crucial role in determining livelihood outcomes. Drawing on Kabeer's (1998) theories regarding key points of decision-making, along with managerial and accounting responsibility and implications of the impact of the loan experienced by women, I looked at the decisions of the women based on the following: Whose idea was it to seek a loan and who took part in deciding? Who utilized and managed the loan and how? Who decided how to use profits from loans and for what was the profit used? In addition, I took into account gender, age, household status, and seasonality as factors which affect women's exercise of agency and their potential for achieving goals.

One of the frequent measures of agency is mobility in the public space in situations where there is a public-private division along gender lines (Kabeer, 1999). One of the newly emerged livelihood activities since Independence is migration for trade. Migration became one of the strategies to sustain and improve the livelihood of people (K Andersen & Pomfret, 2004; Kamp, 2005a; Kandiyoti, 2003b). Women who had been working in teaching, medical, and other spheres, chose to do shuttle trade. Women in the post-Soviet states who are engaged in the new and risky shuttle trade are called *chelnoki*, a derogatory term for traders. The traders usually travel to Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Korea, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Iran to purchase clothes, fabric, shoes, and equipment and then resell these goods at home or in markets. Many women took these uncomfortable roles of *chelnoks*. They chose to travel long distances and cross

state borders with heavy bags and boxes and to spend long hours in bazaars. Little is known about the impact of migration on the empowerment of women in regard to their contribution to the household, their participation in decision making of the allocation of resources, networking, developing strategies, and creating a new context for equality.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict gives an in-depth understanding of a culture's social construction of reality (Augsburger, 1992) and human consciousness. In metaphorical terms, culture is a "perception-shaping lens or (still metaphorically) a grammar for the production and structuring of meaningful action. Therefore, an understanding of the behaviour of parties to a conflict depends upon understanding the 'grammar' they are using to render that behaviour meaningful" (Avruch & Black, 2001, p. 7). Boulding (2000) suggests that there are no conflict-free societies. Peace and conflict resolution experts view conflict as a natural, rational, universal, ubiquitous, and intrinsic part of human nature (Augsburger, 1992; E. Boulding, 2000; Galtung, 1996), and as a driver of change. Johan Galtung (1996) suggests that inside each conflict lies a contradiction, a problem that needs to be solved while Ravhan and Hossein Danish (2002) define conflict as an absence of unity. Galtung (1996) asks: "And what could serve better as a *force motive* for any actor, individual or collective than a problem demanding to be solved?" (p. 70).

Hossain Danesh and Roshan Danesh (2002) critique contemporary processes of conflict resolution which are mostly based on the observation that conflict is a pervasive part of human life at all levels and in all contexts. They view conflicts as abnormal because individuals have a capacity to prevent conflicts. Fry (2006) points out that a traditional set of beliefs in western thinking fixed on the human capacity for

violence. Hossain Danesh and Roshan Danesh (2002) state that conflict theory assumes the inevitability of inter-group competition and the desirability of conflict. They refer to Galtung and Jacobsen (2000, p. vii) who write, “Conflict, incompatible goals, are as human as life itself; the only conflict-free humans are dead humans” and that “war and violence are like slavery, colonialism, and patriarchy; however, they come and go.” Moreover, these assumptions gave an origin to conceptualizing peace in dichotomist terms, with peace (Galtung, 1996) as absence/reduction of all forms of violence that can be negative and positive. Hamdesa Tusso (2007) highlights the role of preserving peace and spirituality by individuals, elders, and clans as means of keeping unity and traditions in the community. Many scholars depart from the analysis of contradictory goals and interests while others stress common interests. In analysing conflicts, I take into account both approaches.

Indigenous Conflict Resolution Approaches

Some conflict management practices are regarded as traditional, or, I would say indigenous if they have been practiced for a long period and have developed within societies rather than being the product of external importation. At the same time, tradition is likely to have been updated, adjusted to fit into a new context, and opened to new directions in order to stay alive through changing times. Traditional does not mean unaltered or archaic (Zartman, 2000). I would consider some traditional knowledge that has been adapted to a local context as a local conflict resolution approach. Thus, in Uzbekistan local conflict resolution is a fusion of indigenous and adaptive conflict resolution approaches that changed during Soviet colonialism and are changing in the present time.

Traditional conflict resolution approaches have been applied to interpersonal, family, community, clan/tribe, and intrastate levels in Islamic societies for hundreds

of years. The approach to conflicts originated from indigenous informal practices based on mediation, negotiation, and arbitration that stress common goals and interests (Abu-Nimer, 2001) of parties and individual as well. In contrast, western approaches are based on formal methods such as conciliation, facilitation, mediation, negotiation, problem-solving, and arbitration, which take place in organizations, governments, courts, and legal systems. In North America, conflict resolution approaches are less informal than indigenous methods of conflict resolution because mainstream people tend to resort to social workers, counsellors, or mediators who work in clinics or mediation centres.

These western approaches stress individual incompatible goals and the various interests of actors (Galtung, 2004). Moreover, mediators in Islamic conflict resolution approaches are not paid and do not represent the interests of the state or any other official party.⁹⁹ Hence, people perceive these mediators to be neutral and trust them more than mediators acting on behalf of the state institutions in Uzbekistan. Indigenous conflict resolution methods stress healing, reintegration of the offender in the community, co-existence, transparency, inclusivity, mutual recognition, empathy, and vision to move on into future (Tursunova, 2008b). These methods relate to livelihood and empowerment of the vulnerable, children, elders, women, and people in distress.

Claims that should be exercised during famine or other crisis situations (Swift, 2006) are considered part of an Islamic practice to support the poor in everyday life to achieve economic justice. Different voluntary practices of charity exist among Muslims in Central Asia: *zakat* (almsgiving) and *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) are

⁹⁹ Informal mediators are usually parents, elders, healers, and *otins*. I am not talking about *qazi* courts because they were state appointees. Imams became state appointees in Soviet times while *otins* became members of the Women's Committees in post-Soviet period. As members of the Women's Committees *otins* are not allowed to interfere into family conflicts substantially. Because women seek advice from *otins* outside their role on the Women's Committees, I still consider them informal mediators.

forms of charitable giving to needy; *waqf* is a part of inheritance to assist the poor; *al-wasiah* is a practice in which a third of one's the property is left to charity and an animal is sacrificed (Zaman, 1996). These methods increase poor people's access to resources through various Islamic regulations that promote cooperation (Zaman, *ibid*): (1) *al-musa'adah* (the law of mutual aid); (2) *bayt al-mal* (the public treasury); (3) *al-diyafah* (law of hospitality), which outlines the social obligation to treat guests respectfully; (4) *al-musharakah* (the law of sharing), which requires Muslims to share their crops with those who cannot afford to buy them; (5) *al-ma'un* (the law of acting in kindness), which requires that Muslims also to lend their tools and equipment to the needy; and (6) *al-irth* (the law of inheritance), which promotes economic justice and equality by distributing an estate equitably among all members of the family. Social empowerment through *ihsan* and *khayr* (doing good) is a path to justice and commitment to empower the vulnerable, and continues to remain a part of individual and social responsibility (Abu-Nimer, 2003; Funk & Said, 2009; Irani & Funk, 2001). Before the Russian invasion social support and welfare was predominantly a family, *mahalla*, and mosque responsibility (Kamp, 2004a).

State Interests: Co-opting Indigenous Ways of Life

In Soviet times the *mahalla*'s role was embedded in communal life by providing infrastructure support (place and kitchen utensils) for carrying out life cycle rituals (Sievers, 2002). The Soviet state and the Women's Committee of the Communist Party started to perform the role of a provider of education, health care, legal aid, and the regulator of the economic plans. The state helped women to demand their rights but also imposed severe limitations on their agency. The Soviet policy promoted a maternalist ideology with the goal to make women mothers and workers. In 1930s the state initiated the award "Hero mother" to boost women's reproduction

by giving subsidies starting from the fourth child provided during one year (Madison, 1968). Paid maternity leaves were extended in different times depending on the labour market needs: in the 1950s from a few paid weeks to one year with partial payment in addition to six unpaid months in the 1980s. In 1989 maternity leaves were extended up to three months with paid leave for eighteen months (Buckley, 1989). Women could only receive social welfare benefits such as maternity leave and child support when they worked on collective farms or plants, factories, and other public institutions. From 1959 to 1989 the ethnic Uzbek population increased by 180.3 percent, contradicting conventional wisdom that when female literacy grows, fertility rates decrease (Olcott, 1990).

People in Uzbekistan supported the Soviet motherhood policy because their cultural expectation towards extended families was quite common. The Soviet state did not address children's mortality problems; many women wanted to have more children out of fear that some children may die in their early childhood rather than as a response to state encouragement. The state central authority was reinforced through its redistributive and social function and the financial support of women.

With the transition to the post-socialist phase, the government decided to decentralize power and move it to the local community structures of *mahalla* to meet the needs of the population. The Mahalla committee, now called the local Citizens' Self-Government organization, is charged with carrying out state functions such as community policing, distributing social welfare, and regulating life cycle rituals and communal life. Young brides and mother-in-laws in Ok Yul often complained that they could not receive child subsidies. The state local officials (male leaders) could withhold subsidies by arguing that the bride's family is not poor; the state authorities looked at the family's financial well-being rather than individual women's financial

situation and vulnerability. A child subsidy is sometimes the sole financial resort for young women, especially when they do not generate income, and having it increases their status in the family.

The concerns about social welfare were often raised in women's ritual gatherings and informal conversations in Ok Yul.¹⁰⁰ Women discuss conflicts and power absolutism at the community level in women's space which women regard as a safe zone for communicating their everyday social and economic dilemmas. This results in an understanding of the ethnographies of multilayered conflicts in a context where criticism of the state is tolerated. Women's spaces represent an alternative place of communicating social problems and discontent with power.

Eric Sievers (2002) points out "Uzbekistan is pioneering absolutism. One state institution is becoming the focal point for all state and non-state functions." Sievers specifies that "every wonderful aspect of *mahalla*, from *hashar* to the *aksaqal*,¹⁰¹ is now a formal legal responsibility of *mahalla*, and failure to abide by any *mahalla* decision is now a state crime, which obviates the magic and basis for social norms. Such an incursion of the state into norms and such a reshuffling of incentives for individual parties sets the stage for the classic breakdown of a community solution to a collective action problem" (p. 152). Traditional male networks of community support were co-opted by the state and the meaning of indigenous practice changed.

During my field work in Ok Yul, I did not observe any *hashar*. *Hashar* practices such as building houses were replaced by the labour of people from rural areas who come to earn cash. I also saw some young men cleaning canals when their courtyards were flooded and there was no sign of neighbours' support. It was evident that community support eroded due to individual self-interest and the availability of

¹⁰⁰ See more about the role and functions of *mahalla* committee and instruments of abuse in Human Rights Watch Report (2003).

¹⁰¹ *Aksaqal* [Uz.] is an elder man in the community.

rural migrant labour. Small floods of water are caused by a poor water management system; there was too much water in the canal in one part of the village (villagers used water for free to water their gardens) and there was no water in other parts of the village. Due to the absence of water in one part, the people of Ok Yul build greenhouses which require minimum amount of water and they used drinking water from faucet to grow produce.

The state attitude toward the women's question was framed under national tradition ideology which reinforced traditional roles of women as mothers and good brides. The current state policy of saving the family makes divorce very difficult and usually people condemn divorce (Mee, 2001). In Uzbekistan, the Women's Committee plays a mediating role trying to reconcile family members and preserve marriages even in cases of the domestic abuse of women (Tursunova, 2003, 2008e). However, the number of appeals to divorce is high. According to one lawyer, the number of unresolved cases in the court is high and the courts are reluctant to grant divorce. The Women's Committee in Ok Yul consists of a religious advisor, a person responsible for the families living in one street, an *otin*, and other community members. In Soviet times, *otins* were never engaged in state structures. This is a new post-Soviet phenomenon when *otins* are part of the Women's Committee. *Otins* and other community members can interfere into domestic problems and can advise, but do not have power to make any decision.¹⁰² The design of state policies is gender discriminatory and *otins* have little or no legitimate power in comparison with male *aksakals*.

¹⁰² Interview with the representatives of the Women's Committee.

Between State and Market: Examining Conflict Resolution

Besides indigenous practices of charity provided to the poor, men and women are involved in other types of communal support practiced through social networking. These include the rotating saving associations (*gap*) of men and women, who jointly or separately host gatherings. These gatherings are carried out for social purposes and also provide access to a lump sum of cash that women can spend (Kandiyoti, 1999b). Further examination is required to explore how these indigenous practices have been modified in the current economic situation and livelihood activities of women. I looked at such dimensions as generation, household status, and age to understand who participates in these gatherings, who makes decisions, and how these networks and financial contributions empower women to improve their household livelihood. I examined how these informal gatherings interact with formal livelihood activities such as farming, informal activities, and trade.

Along with indigenous forms of gatherings, women solidarity groups organized by women of authority are important locations for religious practices of women in Turkic-Iranian culture. Women of authority in Kazakhstan contest patriarchal laws, and provide assistance, advice and care for those whose human rights were violated (Fathi, 2007). In Central Asia, women of authority, *otin oyi* in Uzbek, are invited to religious gatherings such as *mavlud*,¹⁰³ or *zikr*, where *otins* recite the Qur'an mixed with fables. Women's beliefs are manifested in female spirits (fertility, ancestor and hearth spirits) and female saints (Ambar-ona, Bibi-Seshanba, etc.) in combination with women's use of amulets, pilgrimages to holy places, female vigils, and so on (Kandiyoti & Azimova, 2004).

¹⁰³ *Mavlud* is an event to honour the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

The role of women of authority is expressed in symbolic dimensions because people think that they are more than religious leaders, and that they also embody the power to carry out miracles. As the socio-economic crisis deepens and households experience suffering, mothers think that these saints can solve issues by bringing prosperity to their houses, combating poverty and unemployment, and making other wishes come true. *Otin oyis* heal and also empower people through *maslahat*. Some of the *maslahats* serve as the models for local people to cope with economic instability in the country and the region (Peshkova, 2006). Little is known about women's solidarity groups of female farmers, migrant women, traders; how women of authority are perceived by rural women, and how these solidarity groups help to run income-generating activities. In addition, how these solidarity groups co-exist with Women's Committees that are fulfilling a governmental agenda in the communities is an issue for research.

Resistance

As conflicts arise out of unequal access to resources and unmet needs, many oppressed peasants worldwide disobeyed and resisted the power of their oppressors also through different nonviolent methods: non-violent protest and persuasion, non-cooperation with social systems (withdrawal from social systems, strikes), and nonviolent intervention (boycott) (Sharp, 2005). Resistance is usually perceived by scholars as a collective protest rather than private and unorganized; moral and altruistic for the benefit of a group rather than opportunistic and individualistic; it must change power and, consequently, deny power and the foundation of domination (Scott, 2009). James Scott (1976, 1998, 2009) in his research in Burma, Malaysia, and Vietnam did not find these common elements of resistance. He revealed that conformity is calculated, and underneath the symbolic and ritual defiance there is an

ideological resistance similar to the surface peace where there is ongoing material resistance.

What modes of nonviolent resistance against oppressors do peasants carry out in Uzbekistan? Caleb Wall (2006) describes several case studies of the non-compliance of peasants in Khorezm region. For example, farmers employed two different techniques for stacking wheat. They divided the wheat they raised, so that 50 percent went to fulfill the state order, and they kept the other half. The first method, used for state-ordered wheat, is that farm workers throw the grain on a pile with little caution for post-harvest quality. The second method, for wheat that will be used for personal gain and consumption, involves delicate stacking to save the wheat from sun and rain damage, resulting in a better post-harvest product. Consequently, from the same crop, farmers have two very different qualities of wheat; the low quality given to the state and the better quality used for domestic consumption. Yet, as Wall points out, this is a short-sighted strategy because the state will give low quality wheat seeds for the next year which will re-establish a dependency relationship between farmer and state. This case illustrates how farmers try to maximize their short-term profits but their non-compliance does not resist the dominant system but in fact reinforces it.

The above-mentioned conflict between the state and farmers shows a conflict resolution style of manipulation and subversion adapted to the socio-economic context. However, conflicts exist at different levels, with multiple actors who challenge the system directly or indirectly. Understanding the complexity of local conflict resolution requires several steps, as Zartman (2000) suggests: (1) examination of the conflict resolution practices that were used in pre-Soviet and Soviet periods; (2) mapping the current conflict resolution approaches and determining what is new and needs to be recognized as different, distinguished from common practices; and (3)

analyzing conflicts in the context of a socio-political structure under an institution of authority and within a community of values.

Furthermore, I explored what methods of conflict resolution women apply to solve conflicts over access to land, water, etc.; why they apply these methods; how they think their approaches differ from that of men, and how these differences could be explained. Examining women's approaches to conflict resolution is important because women are just as involved in the rural economy as men are, and they are actively changing circumstances and producing and recreating forms of conflict resolution, just as men are. If we do not look at what women are doing, we have seen only a partial picture.

Examining Social Changes

This study addresses social change in rural livelihoods considering historical, political, cultural, socio-economic, and environmental aspects to explore multiple transformations of livelihoods in response to agricultural policies in the post-Independence period. The rural development in Uzbekistan underwent a dual process of *demonetization* and *reagrarianization*. The state's concurrent goals of maintaining cotton revenues and the satisfaction of the self-subsistence level acted to strengthen the separation between a declining smallholder and the export economies, yet both economies mutually are dependent upon one another (Kandiyoti, 2003a).

The reformation of the agricultural sector has been steady and many collective and state farms did not operate during the 1990s. The agricultural reforms leading to the transformation of collective farms and *kolkhozes* to *shirkats*, *shirkats* to independent private farms (*fermer ho'jaligi* in Uzbek) and the allocation of subsidiary plots for self-subsistence were accompanied by the loss of social protection, formal employment, and social entitlements, in particular for women. Women work in cotton

fields, in rice paddies, on *tomorka* and farms, and/or household plot of land and some migrate for trade. There is little known about livelihood activities of women in the context of the transition economy - their response to agrarian land tenure changes, their strategies, their access to resources, the intra-household division of labour, modes of management, and control of household income.

The privatisation of farms went along the same gender lines as the management of the collective farms in Soviet times, being male-dominated. In post-Soviet times, rural elites from administrative and agricultural sectors registered farms in their wives' names to be entitled to full farming. The number of registered female-led farms is limited and very few women run the farms. The female farmers used to provide administrative and technical support in the agricultural sector; they face a constant struggle with the male-dominated system that decreases their access to resources. There is a little information about the identities of female farmers, their professional background, age, ethnicity, and household status. I looked at how gender ideology is constructed and determines how women perceive their identity.

Understanding the gender specifics of farming in transition economies through research provided more data about how power and power relations impact the access and control of such resources as land, knowledge, labour and other types of resources, and determine agendas and decision making within the household. Examining what motivates women to pursue specific strategies, how they utilize resources, social networks, and institutions helped me to explore how female farmers establish and sustain livelihood strategies, and how they think their activities, strategies and choices are different from men's activities. Furthermore, I examine how female *dehqons* interact with farmers, and how community, local and global markets are driven by culture, policies, and gender ideology.

Yet, people are not only influenced by the environment but also exercise agency in shaping a new context through carrying out livelihood activities and also exercising pressure for change in many ways (Rowlands, 1997). Examining the processes of empowerment of female farmers, migrant women, and agricultural workers by looking at the processes of choice, agency, and outcomes achieved, sheds light on the ways women exercise power, voice, control, and management of livelihood activities. Empowerment also concerns the processes of gaining control over the sources of power, materials assets, knowledge, ideology (Batliwala, 1994), and control over or change of structures (Johnson, 1992). Thus, I explore how gender ideology impacts the design of livelihood strategies, how knowledge is developed, and how knowledge impacts the transformation of gender roles in rural areas in Uzbekistan. Examining women's involvement in decision-making, allocation of resources, and creating a new space, as well as women's voicing of concerns within household and community allowed me to analyze how empowerment impacts not only the household but also structures outside the household domain of women who make significant financial contributions to the household.

Different indigenous livelihood practices such as *zakat*¹⁰⁴ and other practices enable the needy to meet their basic needs. Several moral guiding principles such as the law of mutual aid, the law of hospitality, the law of sharing, the law of inheritance, and the law of doing good represent a form of social empowerment as a path to justice, equality, and the empowerment of the poor (Abu-Nimer, 2003). Poor people in Uzbekistan pursue multiple livelihood activities (self-subsistence, agricultural and non-agricultural) to meet their basic needs. The above-mentioned Islamic practices of almsgiving function as an extra support to the families that gives a sense of

¹⁰⁴ *Zakat* [Ar.] is a practice of almsgiving by the *shariat* aimed to support the poor.

community belonging. With the emergence of the new actors in rural areas, farmers are expected to carry out some of the Islamic practices which show how indigenous practices of charity can be institutionalized at the structural level.

The communal participation of people in building roads, houses, or other types of work (*hashar*), and participating in *gap* gatherings mostly for social entertainment and networking but also for accessing cash, serve as examples of the mobilization of livelihood. The indigenous practice of carrying out *gap* by men and women acts as micro-credit that does not require any collateral and is based on trust, co-operation, and mutual responsibility. I examined how these and other indigenous practices were modified in transition economies. In particular, I studied how these informal networks empower women and improve their personal and household well-being. Moreover, examining the formation of the social inclusion and exclusion of migrant women, farmers, and traders provided data how social networks are formed (age, status, background, class, kin ties, friends), what makes these networks sustainable, and what is the impact of the participation in these networks on the livelihood of people. The analyses of the above-mentioned ideas for research were assessed through several theoretical interdisciplinary frameworks: SL, empowerment, and indigenous conflict resolution (SLEICR).

Conclusion

Livelihood resilience or agency-building is key in understanding the agency of women in coping with the complexities of colonization, structural, direct, psychological, and domestic violence. In this study, agency refers to people's increasing ability to respond to cultural, socio-economic, and environmental shocks, stresses, and perturbations with the aim to accommodate, organize, and re-organize for sustainable living. Besides income-generating livelihood strategies, drivers of

change in resilience thinking are located in rituals, cosmologies, indigenous and local knowledge, and women's beliefs in female cults, shamanism, and pre-Islamic beliefs. Women create their own spaces to question, reflect, and design new and dynamic discursive knowledge to connect to her story in history, address distresses, and reclaim power and knowledge. Women's income-generating activities and cultural and sacred knowledge can empower women to reflect about their role in the society and design avenues for change.

The state construction of the "women's question" and masculine co-optation of indigenous conflict resolution practices into the state system impels me to examine these practices to understand how indigenous social networks and practices, and the state Women's Committee interact and deal with a wide spectrum of issues. Understanding women's religious practitioners' (*otins* and healers) knowledge produced with women at sacred spaces provide women with theories and practices to improve individual and community livelihoods. This knowledge is vital for the development practitioners, peace and conflict studies scholars to design peacebuilding strategies under the supervision of the communities to renew people's agency.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH Is A SACRED RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction

Because this study explored the complex dimension of livelihood, different sociological, ethnographic, mixed methods for collecting data were used to examine continuity and discontinuity in social change in rural livelihoods in Uzbekistan. These methods included: (1) in-depth interviews to gain insights into particular issues of empowerment; (2) narrative inquiry as the primary data for meaning-making and interpreting livelihood experience by women and reflecting about choices women have, agency, and outcomes they achieve; (3) case studies to provide in-depth analysis of livelihood activities such as farming, trade, and tailoring; (4) informal conversations and participant-observation; and (5) traditional women's rituals and informal women's social and savings networks as indigenous focus groups.

Chapter Overview

The chapter consists of three parts. The first part provides theoretical and conceptual considerations that I took into account to work with people in Uzbekistan. The second section begins with an overview of the research background, its setting, household notions, and participants and their roles in knowledge production. The third section discusses my ethnographic methods of interviews, narratives, case studies, and participant-observation, and data analysis. Drawing on the cultural worldviews and ways of living of my people, this research provides pathways for developing approaches to working in indigenous communities.

Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations

This narrative research is informed by three theoretical considerations: (1) indigenous research paradigm that calls for working within indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology; (2) community governance; and (3) women's voices and situated knowledges of participants and a researcher.

Relational Accountability

In his book, *Research Is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson (2008) explains several concepts that are vital for my fieldwork. Wilson writes that ontology relates to the nature of existence, or reality:

Indigenous ontology has multiple realities like the constructivist research paradigm. The difference is that, rather than the truth being something that is "out there" or external, reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth. Thus an object or thing is not as important as one's relationship to it. [...] reality *is* relationship or set of relationships that makes up indigenous ontology. Therefore, reality is focused not on objects but processes of relationships, and an Indigenous ontology is actually an equivalent of an Indigenous epistemology (p.73).

Epistemology is the study of the nature of thinking or thought. Indigenous epistemology as systems of knowledge is constructed on relationships between things, rather than on the objects themselves. It includes:

entire systems of knowledge and relationships. These relationships are with the cosmos around us, as well as with concepts. They thus include interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental and spiritual relationships, and relationship with ideas. Indigenous epistemology is our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities, and our places in cosmos. Indigenous epistemology is our systems of knowledge in their context, or in relationship (p. 74).

Indigenous epistemologies are subject to globalisation, market reforms, and state policies. They are not static; they transform to address global issues and deal with local distress and trauma. Hence, people may transform epistemologies to mobilize and reclaim power and voice especially in marginalized communities.

An indigenous axiology is grounded in the notion of “relational accountability.” Being responsible to all (human, environmental relations and cosmologies) relations is the key meaning in accomplishing obligations in the research relationship (Wilson, 2008). While axiology requires accountability to relations and respectful knowledge production, an indigenous methodology must be a process that adheres to relational accountability. Summing up, ontology and epistemology are centred on a process of relationships that create a reality between a researcher and people. The axiology and methodology are founded on maintaining accountability to relationships. I adhere to an indigenous research paradigm which is based on relations between a researcher and respondents and maintaining relational accountability.

When I came to Ok Yul village and settled down, I met women who gave a blessing to my research and study in Canada. *Otin oyis* gave their special blessing, talking about their lives in the past, current prosperous economic opportunities and women’s issues. My hostesses smudged¹⁰⁵ the place with *isiriq*¹⁰⁶ several times to strengthen my being, thinking, and doing. This ritual of blessing and smudging laid a foundation for my relations, relational accountability, and respect for the women, community and the cosmology.

Building relations culminated with the feast I held at the end of the field work, where the co-participants of the study came to show the appreciation of their time spent with me. They also offered their blessings for an excellent study in Canada and

¹⁰⁵ Smudging is a ceremony of burning herbs inside or outside the house. Smudging is carried out to cleanse a person from bad thoughts, feelings, emotions, and negative energy. The process involves physical, psychological, and spiritual cleansing. Similarly, smudging turns the profane place into a sacred space. This ceremony helps a person to clean and purify and prepare for healing in a sacred space without being disturbed by negative thoughts. A person entering this sacred space prays, sings, and recites (individually, in group, and/or with *otins* and healers) to enable spirits to come and help in spiritual journey. Smudging transforms and empowers people to act in a sacred manner.

¹⁰⁶ *Isiriq* [Uz.] is traditional herb used for smudging.

also finding a proper Muslim man in my life, a man who is honest, respectful, trustworthy, and caring. My entry into the field and exit was blessed by women of different age and statuses. Blessing is a ceremony that ties people to an accountable long-term relationship. This research axiology, methodology, epistemology, and ontology represents a ceremony and my sacred responsibility (Wilson, 2008). I found myself in the web of relations to people, on the land where I pick herbs, located in the current context of politics and laws, as well as my history, and the future of my people. My “being in relationship” (Wilson, 2008) and relational accountability speaks to me about the key area of my research, my sacred responsibility. My sacred responsibility lies in the network of relationships, my ontology.

This study is informed by the indigenous research paradigm that calls for working within indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Following an indigenous ontology, epistemology, and axiology, I situate my research within the oral traditions of my culture using people’s narrative inquiry. This approach enables me to address: (1) a set of relationships in being and knowing (ontology and epistemology); (2) the relational quality of knowledge, knowledge as cultural and based in a relational context; and (3) axiology and methodology, ethics of my actions, that adheres to relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). My sacred responsibility is centred on Transparency, Respect and Reciprocity, Accountability, Collaboration, and Knowledge production (TRRACK).

Community governance

I situate my sacred responsibility within the agenda of community self-governance or as Linda Smith (1999) says, self-determination. Smith believes:

Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through

and across wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples. The processes, approaches and methodologies – while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities – are critical elements of a strategic research agenda (pp.115-116).

To understand all processes of decolonization, healing, and mobilisation, I listen to women's voices. Feminist scholars (Hooks, 1994; Harding 1991; Reinharz, 1992, De Lauretis, 1987) promote a research methodology that would avoid personal detachment and pursue collaboration and empathic connection with subjects of the research. This research attempt to promote personal and social and cultural transformation of the participants of the study and myself.

Listening to Women's Voices

I consider a situational approach to knowledge by examining women's distinctive experience of knowing and living. This approach enables me as an ethnographer to be more open to the teller's positionality and their personal stories and less on scientific knowledge (Abu-Lughod, 1991). The respondents have an opportunity to express their cultural constructs independently from thinking of the ethnographer (Bernard et al., 1986). I listen to women's voices by looking at the networks of "situated and embodied knowledges" (Haraway, 1988) that inform women's situational experience and standpoint and my own experience. In turn, I see networks of "situated knowledges" between researcher and the women as mutually influencing, informing, and producing new knowledge, experiences, and standpoints.

I consider women as social actors who ascribe meaning to events and conditions in their lives (Chase, 2005). Hence, I listen to the voices of narrators, and their authority to explain and present themselves and their experience through the process of telling and retelling. Feminists argue that knowledge is situated,

historically and socially, and personally constructed; knowers can be conscious of the processes by which they construct knowledge and are also constructed by it (Hartman, 1991; Wylie, 2004).

To discuss knowledge production in the research community, I build this analysis on the feminist theories that claim distinctive experience of women's ways of living and knowing (e.g. Harding, 1986; D. E. Smith, 1987). The feminist deconstructivist Donna Haraway (1988) argues that knowledge that is based on networks of "situated and embodied knowledges" informs the situational experience of the knowers because subjugated standpoints seem more adequate, sustained, and objective opinions of the world. She explains that "All the western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object" (p. 583).

Women's knowledge is also situated within culture, power, and politics related to their personal experiences. Research is an opportunity to explore networks of situated knowledge among women (including the researcher) that is embedded in space, gendered bodies, class, identities, power relations, and privileges. In this case, women's knowledge is socially located and constructed and is subject to negotiation, especially when women share experiences of oppression.

Research Background

Setting

The fieldwork for this study was carried out in Ok Yul located in Tashkent region. The village consists of two *mahallas* (communities), Chingiz and Amir, and is located near Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

I changed the name of the village and *mahallas* to preserve the anonymity of the participants of the research. The selection of the site is based on my previous encounters with people from this village. Their hospitality, understanding my passion for justice, peace, and equality and equity led me to become part of their community.

Defining Household

My fieldwork revealed the complexity of defining “household.” Households are defined as domestic units whereby members manage resources jointly or separately with the aim to pursue their main needs. The locals differentiate household (Uz., *khojalik*) from families (Uz., *oila*) because becoming a family entitles young married people to a new household plot of land, which is granted by the village administration. The typical extended household consists of an elderly married couple (parents-in-law) followed by two married sons with children and unmarried daughters and sons living off one *hovli*.¹⁰⁷ Of 42 extended households, eight extended households were female-headed by widows living with married children. Due to customary rules, these widows own the land and a house. The property is registered in the widow’s name to ensure social security after her husband passed away.

Three of the eight widow-headed households had an uncommon composition. These household members reside with an *ichki kuyov*.¹⁰⁸ That is, in these cases married daughters are living in their parents’ house with their husbands, which is counter to customary practice which requires married women to reside with their husbands at their in-laws’ household or in a nuclear family. These married men who reside with their in-laws are *ichki kuyovs*, or “internal husbands.” Of these three families, two live on a female-owned property each with one *ichki kuyov*. A fourth

¹⁰⁷ *Hovli* [Uz.] is a courtyard.

¹⁰⁸ *Ichki kuyov* [Uz.] is an internal husband. Internal husbands exist in many parts of the world. In Pakistan, *gher damad* [Urdu] means house son-in-law (Farooqui, 2012). In Bangladesh, *ghor jamai* [Bengali] means house husband (Rahman, 2012).

atypical household consisted of one male casual labourer from Tashkent who had higher education but worked in a greenhouse and agricultural plots of land during winter, spring, and partially in summer.

When I asked people to tell me who lives with them, they usually specified their relationship to that person – mother, daughter, and son-in-law. They consider themselves in relationship with other people who are part of their kin network. Yet, there were occasions when a household did not report other family members because they lived in another household plot even though they shared labour and food; people considered these to be separate family units that form consequently separate household units. Moreover, some women did not want to report *ichki kuyovs* as household members because they thought that they lived temporarily in their families in Ok Yul and would leave for some time to the Fergana Valley or Kashakadarya or Surkhandarya regions from which they came. These women argued that *ichki kuyovs* do not have *propiska*¹⁰⁹ and that “Selsovet”¹¹⁰ (the rural administration) did register them officially in their former unit. These *ichki kuyovs* had *propiska* in the same village or other regions in which they were born and lived and, in fact, having *propiska* in two places is not permitted. Before I could figure out the household composition, some women complained about *ichki kuyovs*, especially if they were formally registered.

Families living in the same *hovli* have different budget mechanisms. Some families share the same land and meals and practice *bir qozon*,¹¹¹ that is, all family members give their salaries to elders in the family. The elders and family members

¹⁰⁹ *Propiska* [Russ.] is official registration at the rural administration office. The registration indicates the place of residence in the passport.

¹¹⁰ The people in Ok Yul referred to the local administration as “Selsovet,” the term introduced in the Soviet times. Selsovet is translated as village council. The Citizens’ Assembly of Ok Yul replaced Selsovet in 1990s.

¹¹¹ *Bir qozon* [Uz.] is one pot.

decide all expenses and prioritise basic needs such as food and other items and decide how to distribute things to meet everybody's needs despite the amount of family members' contribution. Some families in extended households may have separate budgeting units. Decisions to pool resources jointly or use them separately are responsive to age, gender composition of households, life cycle events, and also changing economic contexts that stimulate different types of budgeting arrangements (Kandiyoti, 1999b).

Extended households headed by parents-in-law pool budgets to share resources equally until their children get married. The moral dimension of the household economy is based on caring for dependents such as elders and children. In Uzbekistan, it is customary that the youngest married son's family, who resides with elderly or widowed parents, should provide care to them. Other married sons build dwellings around the *hovli* or set up a separate domestic unit in the *mahalla* when there is a shortage of domestic plots of land or other reasons.

Yet, the pooling and sharing of resources does not imply that households are conflict-free settings. Conflicts over household resources may manifest, and gender asymmetries and power relations in the distribution of resources may also exist in such families. Families in extended households may comply with the rules, yet subvert the rules of pooling budgets into one pot by hiding their income.

For example, four families live on one household plot of land. These families practice *bir qozon* and the elders manage and control the budget of the entire household. It is usually a younger son who stays with his parents, but in one of the households Mansur, the youngest son, subverted the rules of residence, decided to live separately, and bought a private plot of land from the rural administration. I believe that his separation was motivated by the higher income from his job in the police

force, relative to that of his brothers who work in the railroad station. Mansur's employer also provided him a separate apartment close to the village which certainly improved his economic power and status. His wife Nodira works as medical nurse in the hospital and also complements the family budget by working informally, giving injections to neighbours. Both young spouses possess economic power that enables them to pursue their personal goal of residential autonomy, while still engaging collectively in ritual ceremonies of their household and community. In this extended household after the elders passed away, the cooking and budgeting arrangement changed into *qozon alohida* (separate pots).

Participants

The research project included 231 adults (122 women and 109 men) comprising 73 households. In Ok Yul, 73 households were surveyed, with 42 of these nuclear families, and 31 extended families.¹¹² These rural households had on average six members, with two children under age 12 and one child between ages 13 and 18. Among 73 households, I interviewed ninety-eight persons (87 women and 11 men) representing different ethnic groups. The majority of participants are ethnic Uzbeks (98%), and the remaining participants (2%) are Kazakhs and Tajiks from two *mahallas*, Chingiz and Amir.

¹¹² I used PASW Statistics GradPack 112 to analyse the statistical data. PASW Statistics GradPack was previously known as SPSS Statistics GradPack. The PASW Statistics GradPack is part of SPSS Inc.'s Predictive Analytics Software portfolio.

Figure 2. Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	
Total number of households	73
Total number of adults	231
Female-headed households	8
Average age of adult household members	43
Household structure	
Total household size (mean)	6.1
Under the age of 12 (mean)	1.9
Age above 13 till 18 (mean)	0.6

The educational background of respondents (Figure 3) shows that of the 122 women interviewed, two women in their 60s received primary education in Soviet times, and 78 women received secondary education in contrast to 71 men. The number of women who received vocational education in medical and pedagogical colleges was almost two and a half times higher than for men: 23 women and four men. More male students pursued higher education: four men and one woman. The number of men who completed higher education is higher than women; 24 men and 18 women. The educational background of respondents demonstrates that women are less likely than men to pursue higher education, consequently limiting their choices and opportunities to pursue livelihood activities and improve their status and well-being.

Figure 3. The Educational Background of Respondents in Ok Yul

	Women	Men	Total
Primary	2	0	2
Secondary	78	71	149
Vocational	23	10	33
Higher ed. in progress	1	4	5
Completed higher ed.	18	24	42
Total	122	109	231

The participants of the study work in public, private, and informal activities. Both women and men pursue a variety of livelihood strategies, but that most of these are in the informal economy. The number of women employed in the public sector is

higher than men: 29 jobs and 17 jobs. Women in the *kishlok* are predominantly employed in low paid sectors of the economy such as education (schools, colleges), or health care (clinics, hospitals); men are employed in education (universities), public utilities (natural gas, water, petrol) and *militsia*.¹¹³ Both women and men work in the service sector such as the airport and railroad systems.

The economic participation reflects two trends in the labour market: *feminisation* and *informalisation* (Chen et al., 2005) leading to greater stratification in the society. Feminisation correlates with the gender imbalance demonstrated in the distribution of human labour by sectors. An alarming tendency is the informalisation of labour: women who work in the informal sector are for the most part tailors, bakers, and petty traders. Men are mainly self-employed as *mardikors*¹¹⁴ (labourers and casual labourers), drivers, and construction workers.

The survey looked for all sources of income of persons over the age of 18. The survey and other methods of qualitative inquiry revealed that many respondents had multiple sources of income. The range of multiple sources of income varied in total from one to seven during 12 months depending on the season. According to the survey, the number of women employed in the private sector¹¹⁵ is lower than men: 10 jobs and 22 jobs. Both men and women were equally represented in the informal economy: 105 women out of total 122 carried out 144 jobs, and 103 men out of total 109 performed 142 jobs. However, within the informal economy there are gender differences in participation.

Figure 4 shows the number of jobs men and women who engage in the public, private, and informal economic sectors.

¹¹³ *Militsia* is a state police set up in Soviet times.

¹¹⁴ *Mardikors* [Uz.] are labourers and casual labourers.

¹¹⁵ Private sector relates to the officially registered businesses such as private shops, bread-making bakeries, and cookies or sewing workshops.

Figure 4. Employment of Women and Men by Economic Sectors in Ok Yul

Economic sectors	Female Jobs	Male Jobs	Total
<i>Public</i>	29	17	46
<i>Private</i>	10	22	32
<i>Informal</i>			
Agriculture and trade	37	43	81
Non-agricultural trade	15	2	17
Artisanal production	29	11	40
Other	6	47	53
Unpaid household labour	17	0	17
	<i>144</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>286</i>
<i>Unemployed</i>			
Unemployed	0	3	3
Pension & social allowance	31	16	47
Total jobs	175	161	336

It was found that 37 women and 43 men were engaged in agriculture and trade; they worked on household plots of land and harvested herbs and horticultural produce and may also have leased land from private farmers to grow cabbage, cauliflower, potatoes, beetroot, strawberries, and spinach. The feminisation of agriculture is accompanied by the increasing engagement of female *mardikors* from the Fergana Valley,¹¹⁶ Surkhanadarya, and Kashkadarya who are hired by the villagers. Men usually plough land and use muscular strength while women perform major work using body strength to transplant, weed, plant, water, and harvest crops.

Particular trade activities in the informal sector were feminized: the majority of women sold their products on the open market in bazaars, receiving lower income when selling their products compared to men, who sold cattle and construction materials. Women were engaged in artisanal production such as tailoring, baking, cooking, and men in brick and bread-making. These constitute the informal sector of the economy. Those who work in the informal sector do not receive social protection and benefits.

¹¹⁶ The density of population and lack of opportunities drives people to the Fergana Valley. Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya are the least developed *oblasts* in Uzbekistan.

It was found that 17 women identified themselves as housekeepers who mostly perform household duties, provide care to elders and children, and are engaged in a small-scale self-subsistence agricultural work in household plots of land. The housekeepers are included in the informal activity category even though they are unpaid household labourers. These women identified themselves as housekeepers but not as unemployed.

Only three of the men in the study were unemployed men. The number of persons receiving a social allowance in a form of pension, stipend for students, or social welfare support for minor children is 31 women and 16 men. The total number of jobs performed by 122 women is 175 and by 109 men is 161.

Selection of Participants

During the fieldwork, I interviewed 98 persons (87 women and 11 men) living in different areas of the village. The purposeful sampling selection techniques enabled me to represent various ages, occupations, social and household status, marital status, and education. I use opportunistic and emergent sampling techniques. I met people who were planting or growing potatoes, carrots, herbs, tomatoes, corn, and/or melons in their gardens or fields. I introduced myself and asked them if they would be interested to talk to me as part of my research project. Sometimes other women joined the conversation and expressed an interest to spend more time with me and talk about challenges and what they do to overcome socio-economic challenges and life conflicts.

The family who hosted me introduced me to their relatives and neighbours who sometimes referred me to healers, *otins*, and the Women's committee workers. The snowball sampling also took place in agricultural fields where women referred me to someone who can provide information about seeds, planting cauliflower, and

potatoes. An average encounter would last two to three hours, and each person was visited five to eight times over the course of the study. I gave pseudonyms to the place names and personal names of respondents to preserve their anonymity.

Ethical issues - Axiology and Methodology

To respect the indigenous culture, I orally presented my research project to the women I worked with. This allowed implementing my research within the local milieu of the oral traditions of indigenous culture (Holliday, 2002), which was congruent with my ethics, not to reinforce and perpetuate domination (hooks, 1989). I provided information about the purpose of the research, duration, confidentiality of the information, and the choice of the withdrawal at any moment. I asked the oral consent of the participants to participate in the study. My research ethic was based on confidentiality, permissions, and informed consent (Newman, 2009). I decided to present consent orally because people feel reluctant to sign any papers; they do not trust papers. I felt that people trusted me because they had a chance to learn about me over time and develop authentic friendship.

I also sought to observe the indigenous code of ethics by respecting participants and the natural environment, and through repeated conversations, we shared knowledge. The relationship with environment is also grounded in indigenous epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology. For example, I gave away leftover vegetable peelings to the villagers in Ok Yul. I observed that people usually did not compost but mix leftover vegetables with mixed fodder to feed their cattle.

Our conversations often evolved around ecology and land disputes where neighbours kept their cattle next to someone's *hovli*. I indicated that people stopped

understanding *harom*,¹¹⁷ meaning that animal dung should not be close to the dwelling and the river. Women were delighted to hear that I use and know specific cultural concepts that speak to their problems. They considered rivers Allah-given and that they should be kept clean and preserved. Women in Ok Yul cleaned waters and polluted areas to preserve natural resource management with the aim to sustain ecological, cultural, social, and the economic interests of future generations.¹¹⁸ Hence, women exercise ecological peacebuilding embedded in respectful attitudes to sacred land, water, air, and all other natural resources, in preventing and dealing with ecological violence.

Data Transcription and Analysis

The processing and the interpretation of the data took place as the research progressed. I used interview data and stories as primary data to concentrate on interpreting the meanings participants gave to themselves and their life experiences. I analyzed data according to the themes that emerged and coded the data under the broad categories. Some of the information I received while taking baking classes with teenagers and young women, I did not include in this research because of the limitations of space in the dissertation. I kept key Uzbek or Russian terms in their original languages and translated them into English.

The data that I analyzed was full of epiphanies such as moments of calamity, transformation, and/or turning points in the experience of women, which resulted in shifting perceptions of their lives. Focusing on meaning allowed me to reflect the voices of women, their feelings, emotions, thoughts, and actions. I tried to understand, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, the nature of experience, how the experience

¹¹⁷ *Harom* [Ar.] is forbidden acts.

¹¹⁸ Vandana Shiva (1989) associates feminine work with the protection of nature and preservation of life and masculinity with environmental destruction.

draws important factors situated in the process of self-understanding, self-discovery, and self-improvement. My aim was to involve the reflection of the dynamism of each participant's experience.

I analyzed epiphanic experiences of each woman which consisted of the following steps: identifying epiphanies, understanding meaning and elements of epiphanies, weaving epiphanies into micro and macro context, developing personal accounts, and finally using characteristics and elements of each personal account to develop joint accounts to discover the perspectives and experiences of a female group of participants. Lastly, joint accounts gave the materials for a collective account. This allowed me to have a picture by comparing and contrasting the viewpoints of the participants within the context. Points of commonality and agreement served as the basis for action, while discrepancies demonstrate the need to examine the data and speak to the respondent around disputable issues.

Validity

To ensure the credibility of the qualitative inquiry, I applied Guba's (1981) criteria of validity to this research. My research was founded on prolonged engagement (six months) to learn the specifics of culture and meaning that sustain people's actions in the milieu. This also permitted me to establish friendly and trustworthy relationships and gain an in-depth understanding of cultural practices (Guba, 1981; Stringer, 2004). The prolonged engagement contributed to the credibility of the study by allocating sufficient time and exploring culture.

Hubbard and Power (1993) consider that "different researchers can also serve as triangulation points" (p. 94). In addition to interviews, I was engaged in informal conversations with the interviewees and participants of case studies to clarify the

issues about which I needed further understanding. The process of member checks¹¹⁹ helped to verify the trustworthiness of information. The practice of triangulation was used to compare different sources of data and various methods with one another. The collection of the different sources enabled me to establish referential adequacy to test analyses and interpretations by “showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, don’t contradict it” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 234). Peer debriefing with interviewees and colleagues who work in the same field during the fieldwork helped me to reflect analysis and interpretation. It allowed me to question and verify insights and ensure the research credibility.

Dependability refers to the stability of the data which I ensured through overlap of methods. I supported narrative interviews with informal conversations, case studies, and participant observation. The transferability of the research implemented through collection of the detailed data may allow other researchers to apply the results of this research into a broader Central Asian context and that of former socialist countries. I practiced triangulation and reflected constantly to confirm the data and reduce my wrong interpretations and biases.

Research Methods Employed

I decided to use qualitative research methods such as interviews and narrative methods of storytelling and narrative inquiry. I chose these methods because storytelling is a widespread form of community peacebuilding, social order, knowledge production, and transmission. Women’s personal stories and shared stories enable listeners to understand the complexity of socio-economic transformations in

¹¹⁹ Member checks mean that informants’ feedback took place during the research to verify their information.

the post-Soviet period and the ways women empower themselves to overcome difficulties, accumulate resources, and enhance their well-being.

These methods are crucial in Peace and Conflict Studies because micro and macro socio-economic analysis and the situational subjectivity of knowers represent their ways of living and knowing. In turn, the political, historical, economic, and social aspects of life inform the situated knowledges of women in rural areas in Uzbekistan. This research represents social location of situated knowledges which is structurally determined and also stresses the emancipatory potential of agents who are conscious of the conditions in which knowledge is produced and legitimized. Thus, the key point of this analysis is legitimizing the unique experiences of women that are connected to their “personal experience” (Harding, 1986, p. 240), “sensuous activity” by intergrating brain, mind, and heart (Rose, 1986), and “self-definition and self-evaluation” that is impossible to separate from the historical and real-life conditions shaping the views of women.

Interviews

My in-depth interviews were a collaborative exchange of ideas between an interviewee and a researcher. For example, I shared knowledge acquired through research with women whose cauliflower turned yellow, resulting in a low market price. I explained that the key to growing cauliflower is to protect it from the sun so that it would not become yellow. I explained that the outside leaves of the cauliflower should be cut by hand and put on the top of cauliflower to protect it from the sun. I also said that as the cauliflower grows, its internal leaves should be cut by hand to allow the crop to grow horizontally as well. I transmitted knowledge that was vital for the women’s income generation.

The approach of “situated knowledges” in the open ended and semi-structured interviews allowed women to represent themselves and voice their concerns about patriarchy, hardships, tensions, interests, conflicts, but also happiness, success, accomplishments which demonstrated alternative views to the prevailing male dominant models of “world-views”, oppression, and gender-based violence. I call local knowledges a production of multiple local voices with “partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology” (Haraway, 1988, p. 584). Feminist notions of situated knowledge allowed me to ask the following questions: What types of knowledge do women in rural areas possess? How do women’s standpoints or perspectives enable them to change gender relations? In the cultural context of rural Uzbekistan, the majority of women are engaged in subsistence, reproductive, and productive spheres where knowledge management is a key to livelihood activities.

In carrying out fieldwork, I recognized that knowledge is created through communication among people, and as all people are socially located (in class, race, gender, identities and so on), with biases, within power relations, and differential privileges, so is the production of knowledge socially located and constructed. I admit that people’s knowledge in Ok Yul is socially constructed and embedded in power relations between me and them. That’s why I tried to be reflective of what was told and looked for meaning and understanding (Potts & Brown, 2005). Power relations existed between women who hold symbolic power (*otin oyis* and healers) and me, a researcher. I was always seated at the foot of the table and they were at the head (the place of honour). Yet, our relations were based on respectful discussion of healing, life dilemmas, marriage, divorce, birth, and death.

My relations with divorced women who were oppressed by their husbands and in-laws were equal. Our discussions related to male dominance and property rights, and the education of their children. In fact, I was provoking some of them to claim their property or to share from all the property the extended household possessed. In these situations both the women and I transcended the boundaries and power relations and transformed interviews into collaborative empowerment and a conflict resolution resource located in the context where knowledge, power, and culture are negotiated.

All interviews were held in Uzbek and sometimes the participants of the research used Russian words to stress their message. I used Russian proverbs to prove my point which participants admired. Women considered knowledge of Russian as a big asset that helps people to find well-paid jobs. I also spoke to a few elderly Kazakh women, these women spoke Kazakh and I spoke Uzbek trying to imitate Kazakh. In cases, when I did not understand Kazakh language I clarified immediately or did not include the data in this research.

Narrative Inquiry

My narrative inquiry allowed me to find out that retelling particular episodes or series of episodes in the life is structured around meaningful events, tensions, and calamities that took place. I was helping one elderly household to prepare for a *gap* delivered by an elderly man, Marip aka. His *gap* included seven classmates with whom he used to study when he lived in Tashkent city. The couple's two daughters and two sons who lived in the city came to assist in organizing the *gap*. The elder's wife, Nilufar opa, invited her niece to give a hand with the preparation to the gathering. The elder and his sons worked in the garden and cleaned the *hovli* for the event.

My engagement in the *gap* included the preparation of the event and help afterwards. I peeled vegetables and cooked *shurva* (soup with mutton, carrots, potatoes, onions, and red pepper) with Nilufar opa and her niece. Both of them made dough, which they spread and cut into squares. They put pieces of ground meat and onions on the square pieces of dough, bundled it and steamed *manti* (steamed dumplings from meat and onions) in *manti kaskon* (a special pot with layers). Women did not serve the food they cooked to male guests. It was Marip aka's son who served food to the male guests in the room.

After the *gap* was over, I had a conversation with Marip aka. When I asked him when he began participating in a *gap* network, he replied that it was after he attended a funeral of his classmate. I insisted on knowing the date because my schooling was Soviet with the Russian language of instruction. In history classes I was taught to memorize the dates of the wars and then provide a description of what happened. My knowledge was part of the Soviet "colonizing knowledges," to use Smith's phrase (1999, p. 58). The positional superiority of western knowledge over my personal knowledge is thereby signified.¹²⁰

The elder told me that he did not remember the date. After I pressed the same question to him, he stated: "Go and talk to Karima opa. She knows everything." Karima opa was known as the TsRU¹²¹ (Central Intelligence Agency) in the community. I realized that the elder man was uncomfortable on my insistence of the dates instead of the relative events and relationship to people he underlined the connection to.

I also asked Marip aka about the meaning he ascribed to joining the *gap* and why he got involved in *gap* after the funeral of his friend. He indicated the importance

¹²⁰ Western knowledges and positional superiority was clearly emebded in the educational curriculum in Soviet times.

¹²¹ TsRU [Russ.] is *Tsentralnoe Razvedovatelnoe Upravlenie*, The Central Intelligence Agency.

of seeing his friends at the *gap* and keeping social ties. The death of his friend made him and his classmates realize the significance of their old friendships, and they decided to start a *gap*. The members contribute 3,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$1.60) each month to the accountant. Contrary to the standard pattern when money is given to the host of the event, Marip aka's *gap's* members collect the money and when someone is sick, has a wedding, or any other ceremonies, the members give 30,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$17) to a member of their network. Families add to this money to make big purchases for life cycle events (e.g. sheep, rice, or carpets).¹²² Marip *aka* kept social ties with classmates because support of each other meant creating a web of human relations with interdependency and interconnection.

The elder's wife, Nilufar opa, who was listening to our conversation, suddenly interfered and said: "Zulfiya, No one knows for sure the exact date the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born. People know this story and Arabs say that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in the Year of the Elephant." She told the story of Abraha, a Christian ruler, who was appointed by the Ethiopian king to rule Yemen. Abraha wanted to destroy Kaaba built by previous generations and turn people into his faith. His plan failed because the elephants did not move towards Mecca as God's prevailed over the war (see full story in Appendix - 1).

As a teller, Nilufar opa dealt with an intrusive question diligently which questioned my incomplete Eurocentric knowledge system. She chose the most respectful way possible to address without damaging my and their dignity. Nilufar opa preserved our human relations and adhered to her axiology, relational accountability and knowledge transmission.

¹²² At the time of the field work, a price of a cow was 2 million *so'm* (U.S. \$117); one sheep, 30,000 - 400,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$167 - 223); one bull, 1.5 million *so'm* (U.S. \$838); and one heifer, 600,000 - 700,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$335-391). The food items such as one kilogram sugar, 2,700 *so'm* (U.S. \$1.50); one kilogram of flour, 1,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$0.55); and one litter of cotton oil, 2,200 *so'm* (U.S. \$1.20).

Nilufar opa takes Qur'anic classes from an *otin* and feels that her responsibility is to educate younger generation about Islam. Nilufar opa used our conversation time to share Islamic knowledge and transmit the shared stories to me, a researcher. Usually *otins* share stories about Islam in ritual activities and women tell stories in informal conversations. These stories pass from one generation to another and create a space for collective knowledge. In this case, collective knowledge speaks to transformation, decolonisation and healing of community members.

When she finished her story, I asked the narrator what her purpose was in telling this story to me. She explained that people may not know the exact dates but they do remember the events. Nilufar opa does not say directly but implies that my emphasis on dates is the wrong emphasis; the important thing is the event.

Then Marip aka introduced another way of thinking about time, which is about seasonality. He clarified that before the Soviets came local people used to say that a person was born when the water melons were ripe, or when the first snow fell down, or one of the fruits or vegetables were ripe. The birth, death, or other significant life cycle events related to the cycles in nature.

Both tellers, Marip aka and Nilufar opa, enabled me to understand what they thought mattered: for Marip aka, that he started participating in a *gap* when a friend of his died, and for Nilufar opa, that time frames can also be understood through Qur'anic stories and that an ordinary conversation can also be a time to remember these stories. Marianne Kamp (2011a) indicates that in her “interviews of old people in Uzbekistan, and all of the old men who were born in the 1920s or after calendar dates were given for their birth, though sometimes they gave two dates—one the official passport date, and the other a different date that they believed was the ‘real’ date. By contrast, old people born in the 1900s and 1910s sometimes gave animal

years instead” (p.19). Hence, different knowledge modalities may co-exist: relevance of events in narration, chronological order, and indigenous time order. Transforming my narrative methodology by understanding different ways of framing relevance of events and time was part of strategy of conceptualizing knowledge production in my fieldwork.

Indigenous Focus Groups

I considered indigenous female gatherings as focus groups because women speak, reflect, connect, share, and develop their new knowledge. I participated in women’s existing talking circles. This approach grounded my research in the socio-economic context which enabled me to understand and explore women’s “situated knowledges” and lived experiences as part of my research methodology. The focus group approach was culturally based in the sense that I attended, participated, and observed in women’s *gaps*, female gatherings of *mavlud*, *ihson*, Mushkul Kushod, and Bibi Seshanba which helped me to gain more insights into narrative inquiry for reflection among narrators such as *otin oyis*, healers, and listeners, and a researcher. The purpose was to observe the activities, human beings, and physical features of a context and to engage in activities that are taking place in this setting that give useful information.

The storytelling of healers and *otins* and their *maslahats* told in female rituals was part of the learning processes and critical thinking of both storytellers and listeners. These *maslahats* and healing practices offered a new perspective on proper moral Islamic values and actions that form individual and collaborative knowledge, a transformatory knowledge discourse between the narrators and the audience.

There are three main aspects in reflective processes: the experience, the discussion processes, and the outcomes. Experience incorporates not only what is done, but also what is thought about the event, the related feelings, and any conclusions that appear as a result. In this model the reflective process is based on returning to the experience, attending to the feelings (positive and negative), and re-evaluation (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Women in ritual and informal gatherings had the opportunity to re-evaluate events and decided how things could be different. I suggest that these circles are indigenous action research circles where women reflect about the social problems, make choices, and some become change agents. I consider women's responses as an art of self-governance situated within the socio-economic and cultural realities that informed their choices, and as actions within common and multiple networks of "situated knowledges."

Participant Observation - Gendered Bodies, Hierarchies

Ethnography is a "writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation" (Burrawoy, 1998, p. 6). I took a participant role to observe activities, people, and the physical features of a context, and to engage in activities that are taking place in the setting that give useful information. Studying seeds, planting potatoes and cauliflower, making *ko'rpacha*, and baking were common activities in which I joined with women to understand constraints, but also opportunities and choices they make on a daily basis.

I planted Dutch seeds under extreme heat of 45C during three days, and took breaks in between to rest and talk. This helped me to gain an understanding of the livelihood issues out of which conflict arose and to examine gender ideology in carrying out income-generating activities. My participant-observer role enabled me to

ask questions and observe women in carrying out their income-generating activities directly.

My participation in community events such as weddings led me to understand notions cultural constructions of gender and bodies. Similar to Kamp (2011b), I observed how people in Uzbek culture interpret and ascribe meaning to their gendered bodies and power manifested in physical place. Sitting at the place of honour means sitting at the top of a room where the table of bride and groom is located. Some women ascribed specific meaning to the absence of verbal communication between the bride and groom, a sign of proper and good behaviour. Ethnographies of bodies and power manifested in space, distance, communication, gendered bodies, and power.

When I was at the wedding, I observed that middle-aged women like me sat in the middle and the younger women sat at the bottom, the entrance of the hall. Young men sat separately at the bottom of the room. Some of the young women who knew me, asked me to sit with them. I rejected their invitation to express my social power and status within Uzbek society by sitting in the middle. Hence, on this occasion I was claiming my power expressed in the utilization of the physical space which I was gendering within the Uzbek cultural framework.

Case Study

The case studies with women's personal stories about growing corn, growing tomatoes in greenhouses, and trading answered "how" and "why" questions about the set of events (Yin, 2003), over which I did not have much control. Family units who live in extended households may hide income without contributing to one pot with the aim to preserve financial resources to meet their own needs. Young married Farida

told me that when she lived in the extended household her husband earned *levyi*.¹²³ “Certainly you will not bring this money to the parent-in-law.¹²⁴ We dressed the children and ourselves. Now I cannot buy clothes. I think let me finish this job, and then next one. Now we do not buy clothes.” When I met Farida she was wearing a worn-out cotton robe, made in Turkey, that had holes at the back. She explained that she wears old things to save money and if she wears new clothes she does not feel like working [*laughing*]. She reflected that “When you live with parents- in-law, you do not think seriously [*she smiled*].”

The example shows that different cultural and gender norms and expectations exist within generations in the social intra-household interaction. In this example, Farida’s husband Anvar bargains by overtly resisting his father, to whom he is subordinate by cultural and gender norms in Uzbekistan, by not giving extra money and reporting additional income he earned. His resistance is backed up by Farida who benefits from this situation by having extra money to spend for children’s and her clothes via her husband thus forming a bargaining coalition against the power of her in-laws. Yet, in this “cooperative conflict” cooperation exists with their parents in-law who collected money from all extended household members to purchase construction materials for Farida’s and Anvar’s new separate house. After living for seven years with an extended household and slowly building a new house, Farida and Anvar moved out to a new separate dwelling in the same *kishlok*.

I suggest that gender norms and duties vary among men of different generations, statuses, and power whereby household members form coalitions in cooperation to manoeuvre, negotiate, hide and benefit from their situation. Young

¹²³ *Levii* [Russ.] is “left” money that is usually earned extra doing informal activities such as trade and is usually not reported to the heads or other extended family members.

¹²⁴ In this situation she refers to and uses the word parents-in-law whereby there is an indication of the problem over the pooling. Usually parents-in-law are called mother or father.

men as well as women (in particular brides) are subordinate to in-laws in the extended families; they may also fight against unfair allocation of resources and control well as against the authority exercised by parents-in-laws and husbands. Harris (2000) indicates that there are substantial gender variations in male gender norms among men of different ethnic backgrounds and classes; even within each group there may also be dissimilarities in identities.

Creating legitimacy of their personal needs is in itself a matter of contestation for women, as is gaining recognition of the worth of their contribution (Agarwal, 1994b). Women in Ok Yul recount different forms of indirect resistance and negotiations: (1) first feeding a husband after he comes home after work and then expressing their needs; (2) hiding fabric or other items for their *sarpa* (trousseau) or other events in their natal home (both genders); and (3) keeping money at the natal home and making gifts at life cycle events or using this money for emergencies (health, support of relatives).

When I asked Farida, a married woman in her thirties, how they decided what to buy in the household, she told me that her father-in-law decided everything. I asked if she went and asked her father-in-law when she needed something. She answered:

No, I did not. My husband went and asked, not me [*laughing*]. But my mother-in-law never bought anything for us because as they said we were building a house. When I went home, my parents bought something for me or I bought something on the money we [*Farida and her husband Anvar*] had hidden. That is how I bought new clothes.

Farida declared these purchases to her in-laws as her parent's gifts. These forms of resistance operate at the individual level of agency that may lead to structural changes in the household without challenging power structures.

Conflicts over financial resources relate to the distribution of natural resources (land), physical infrastructure (house), and social networks. After the death of one of

the parents or both, families stop pooling the budgets and may divide the common household plot of land into two parts leaving a door at the dividing wall. Some families may share the land to grow horticultural produce for household consumption and/or trade but may have different cooking pots as well as separate budgets. In a few extended households separate pooling arrangements led to inter and intra household spatial inequalities in regard to possession of resources and land.

In focusing on the interplay of forms of capital, Bourdieu (1990) highlights how economic capital converts into symbolic capital (social and cultural) and, vice versa, symbolic capital transforms into economic capital. Oinisa opa and her husband Kahor aka possess 22 *sotka* (22,000 square metres) of land. They both reside in a newly built house consisting of one bedroom at the end of courtyard. Their two sons and their families reside with them; parents live in a compound A; the eldest son Karim and his wife Nazira (see her participation in gap network in Chapter 6) occupy a newly built compound B (two bedrooms, living room and a kitchen), possess a greenhouse with *isiriq* hanging in front of the structure (B) and Garden (B); the second son Jalil and his wife Hadija live in a compound C where parents-in-law used to live (two small bedrooms and a living room); their divorced daughter Marguba lives in one small bedroom with her son (room D, see illustration on p. 145). The structural organization of the compound reveals the symbolic power that comprises economic activities, social (networks and connections) and cultural (education) resources (Bourdieu, 1990), hierarchies in income generation of livelihood activities of the residents, and the use of space and power.

Oinisa opa used to be a school teacher and her husband Kahor aka worked on the *kolkhoz*. They both used to plant strawberries and garlic to generate private income in Soviet times. They are both retired and receive a pension. Nazira (see

chapter 6 for Nazira's participation in *gap* network), who used to be a teacher with higher education (education which is, of course, a form of cultural capital) in the post-Soviet period, now works in the greenhouse and learned new agricultural knowledge and skills (new cultural capital) on how to raise tomatoes. In April tomatoes attracted a price of 7,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$4.40) per kilo; selling tomatoes at this price enables Nazira to generate about eight million *so'm* (U.S. \$4,469). Her husband, Karim, a university graduate, works as a policeman and earns 500,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$279) per month. Karim received his higher education a few years later than his wife because he realized that education is a key to promotion in his career. The young couple's economic activities enable them to accumulate economic capital and also enlarge social networks. In addition, Nazira's participation in her ex-colleagues' *gap* and other social activities allows her to maintain and enlarge her social network. The second son, Jalil, who has secondary education, is a construction worker who earns about 250,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$139) per month, depending on the season. His wife Hadija, a secondary school graduate, does laundry for a kindergarten and earns 150,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$88). Jalil and Hadija do not have a greenhouse.

Marguba opa, with college education, works in the school and earns 280,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$156). Both Marguba and Karim have higher education, yet Karim earns more because structural policies provide better payment for the male-dominated police force rather than the female-dominated teaching workforce. It is evident that income-generating activities from the greenhouse, in addition to cultural resources such as higher education, provide a privileged status, a position that produces and reproduces economic and social inequalities that result in symbolic unequal usage of land in household compound.

Bourdieu (1987) highlights the role of capital in class relations in a social world which can be considered as multidimensional space with diverse forms of capital (cultural, symbolic, social, economic) that can help to acquire scarce goods. Capital shows that the structure of this space is encrypted by the distribution of the different forms of resources, that is, by the distribution of properties conferring strength, power, and hence profit to their owner (pp. 3-4). However, Bourdieu does not examine gender ideology within the cultural setting in terms of inequities and inequality within the household. For instance, Karim's gender-based violence was expressed when he sold his sister's land, registered in her name, without consulting his parents, sister, nor other family members. He used this money to build his house and a greenhouse to improve his living conditions, but he certainly exercises dominance and control over women's ownership of land and even denies it.

Women's ownership of property in the Qur'an favours male privilege and hence denies women access to natural resources. The Qur'an says that "The share of man is equal to that of two women. If there are more than two women then they will get two-thirds and if there is only one she will get half of the property left" (cited by Haq, 1970, p. 124). For divorced women in extended households, claiming property rights is complicated even though men are assigned obligations to take care of their sisters because sons receive a double share of property.

While the parents of Marguba provided one bedroom for her and her son, it seems that the social reproduction of the system of dominance is maintained through allocation and control of the space by Karim who resorts to the "elementary forms of domination" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 129).¹²⁵ He exercises joint control with his wife

¹²⁵ Bourdieu (1990) stresses that "personal authority can only be lastingly maintained through actions that reassert it practically through their compliance with the values recognized by the group. The 'great' can least afford to take liberties with the official norms and they have to pay for their outstanding value with exemplary conformity to the values of the group. Until a system of mechanisms

Nazira over the greenhouse tomatoes that they both trade. When Nazira asks her *ovsun* (sister-in-law) Hadija to sell tomatoes and leave some profit to her, she transforms social and economic capitals into symbolic power. This transformation of capital

presupposes a form of labour, a visible (if not necessarily conspicuous) expenditure of time, money, energy, a redistribution that is necessary in order to secure recognition of the prevailing distribution, in the form of the recognition granted by the person who receives, to the person who, being better placed in the distribution, is in a position to give..." (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 129).

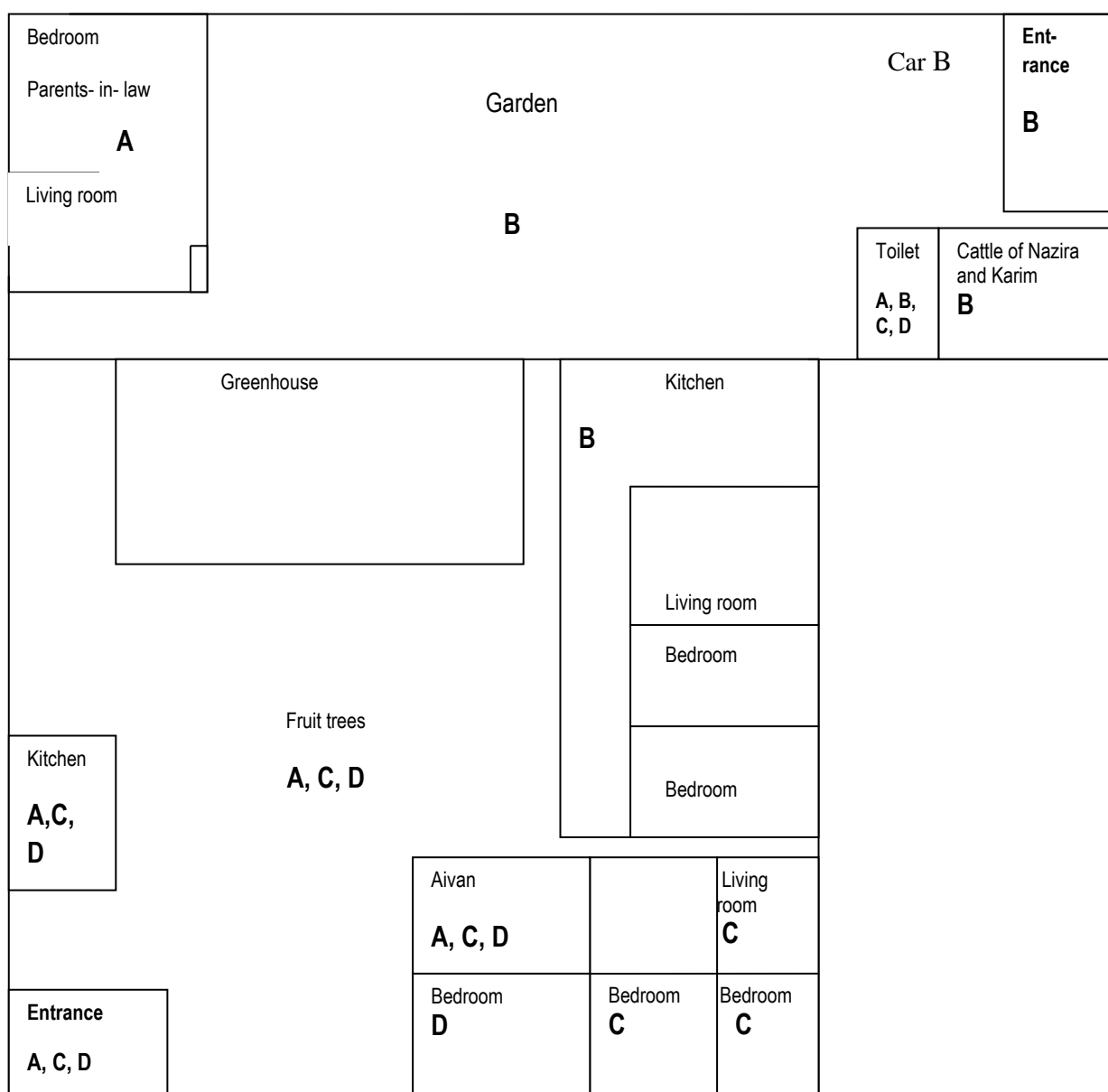
Yet, a secure position does not guarantee equality and equity in joint control and management of the household resources. In this case, the land, house, or the means of transportation such as Nexia or Jiguli cars belongs to Karim; his wife does not possess any property unless she becomes a widow or a single female head of her household.

Furthermore, power relations and conflict dynamics cannot always be one-sided. The power over of the oppressor can be subverted in the space of social interaction with moments of pressure and resistance (Bourdieu, 1990). The above-mentioned example shows that subversion and resistance can be found in Nazira and Karim's case, but rarely. This young family with substantial income benefit by subverting the rules and regulations of the household and cultural expectations of parents-in-law and pursue their strategic livelihood projects through diversification: trade of tomatoes, employment in the public sector, and participation in *gap*. The cultural norms of domination, control, and compliance can be reversed against the heads of households through a multidimensional spectrum of livelihood projects of

automatically ensuring the reproduction of the established order is constituted, the dominant agents cannot be content with letting the system that they dominate follow its own course in order to exercise durable domination; they have to work directly, daily, personally, to produce and reproduce conditions of domination which even then are never entirely certain. They cannot appropriate the labour, services, goods, homage and respect of others without 'winning them personally, 'tying them, in short, creating a bond between persons" (p. 129).

the younger generation. This indicates the need to examine the complexities and fluidity of power relations, and to reject the idea that women are only victims, and men only oppressors.

Figure 5. Hovli Plan (courtyard)



Pictures - Analyzing Conflicts

During my fieldwork, I took pictures and brought them back. Women deciphered the content of pictures in depth in terms of conflict, social status, hierarchy, age, and class that I did not see. For example, when I brought a picture of two women sitting at the table at the wedding I attended, Fazilyat opa noted that in the photo, her neighbour Matluba opa (who is also her sister-in-law) was sitting far from her. Fazilyat opa said: “I didn’t quarrel with her.” Fazilyat opa and her next door

neighbour Kamila opa looked at other pictures and talked about the bride and groom. Fazilyat opa said that a bride “has a nice haircut. They (bride and groom) sat so well, nicely. They did not talk with each other. We (elder women) sat at the top, all elder women.” Fazilyat opa in her interpretation of the physical and social setting of the wedding (setting of the tables) expressed in the pictures pointed to hierarchies, age difference that are reflected in space and her position in the society.

Coming back to the interpretation of pictures, I did not feel comfortable asking about her conflict. And perhaps Fazilyat opa assumed that I knew enough about it. When I told one elder woman in the village that I was going to see Fazilyat opa she informed me that Fazilyat opa quarrelled with her *ovsun* (sister-in-law), Matluba opa. It turned out that Fazilyat opa kept horses and cattle behind the *hovli*¹²⁶ of her sister-in-law just next to the river. Matluba opa was building a new house and she no longer wanted to keep the cattle anymore because of the smell. Fazilyat opa’s daughter Sharipa who is married and lives separately in another village came to visit her mother. The epiphany of this story for all parties in conflict was that Sharipa went and beat Matluba opa’s *kelin*¹²⁷ and injured her brain. Her *kelin* stayed at home and now Matluba opa does not know if she should go to court or not. The conflict also made the victims ponder if they should select retributive justice (court system) or restorative justice and use informal methods of negotiation or mediation.

My analysis of the social uses of domestic spaces allowed me to examine conflicts. In this case, conflict also changed gender constructions, where women took non-traditional roles and used physical violence against each other. Hence, they took a violent and coercive rather than a peacebuilding stance. Women are involved in the construction and transformation of gender discourses and identities and direct political

¹²⁶ *Hovli* [Uz.] is a courtyard.

¹²⁷ *Kelin* [Uz.] is a young daughter-in-law.

actions not as victims of conflicts but as agents. Conflict goes beyond confirmation of gender roles in subordinate positions; it transforms identities and roles in constructive and/or destructive ways. Peace and gender studies researchers tend to focus on the victimhood of women in war zones and/or the constructive elements of women's peacebuilding, but ignore women's engagement in violent actions within the household setting. There is a long standing essentialist notion about women as peaceful and the gender/peace studies scholars sometimes draw on this image.

When the conflict evolved, Matluba opa's entrance door was slightly opened, which meant that visitors are not welcome to her place. Usually people keep the doors open, and during the day (except noon) anyone is welcome to come in. The physical space indicated that the community members and the whole community are in distress. I think the community space turned into a contested space with unfolding epiphanies and calamities, such as the use of aggressive force. These transformations within families and communities indicate economic constraints with the increasing inequalities and shortage of agrarian land.

Epiphanies

I consider life story and life history interchangeably, as both are meta-narratives. Life stories of women in Ok Yul evolve around important aspects of personal life such as epiphanic moments (Denzin, 1989), or turning points in women's lives (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001). In their livelihood accounts, women described their choices and also turning moments in their lives such as sickness, marriage, and divorce which were situated and linked to socio-economic opportunities and constraints. Before starting my research work, I was expecting to hear about conflicts from women but was afraid to be a participant and observer of the family conflicts. When I was weeding Dutch cauliflower seeds with Samira (See Chapter 6

about Samira's livelihood activities), a young woman, in her household plot of land, she informed me that her husband (Jasur) left in the morning to receive Dutch potato seeds from a company but still (evening 6 p.m.) he did not come back home.

Because it was Samira's decision to buy potato seeds from a "*savdogar*"¹²⁸ as she said, they had not been able receive potato seeds for a few weeks. Jasur blamed his wife. Jasur and Samira gave him 2.6 million *so'm* (U.S. \$1,453) in cash. Samira told me that "they got into the hands of a *moschenik*."¹²⁹ Samira found out that all her neighbours purchased potatoes from a company and had already received their seeds. When I asked Samira why she did not buy seeds from the company, she answered that she did not know about it. Perhaps, the fact that Samira had to withdraw from the female *gap* networks was the reason she did not have access to such important information such as where to buy seeds (See chapter 6 about Samira's withdrawal from *gap*'s network).

While Jasur was waiting in the office, Samira started using her social networks to solve the issue of the purchase of potatoes. Several times she used my mobile to call her uncle who worked in the company that distributes foreign seeds and asked him to help to obtain these potatoes. Samira also called her husband several times and once asked if her husband drank beer; his voice did not seem normal to her. Samira said that if they do not receive these potatoes, Jasur will not "let her sleep all night." I could not understand what Jasur might do to Samira: criticize and/or physically abuse her. I thought that Samira did not want to explain everything to me and perhaps I was not grasping the information well. I realized that her personal story is missing a storyline of psychological and/or perhaps physical abuse.

¹²⁸ *Savdogar* [Uz.] is a reseller, speculator.

¹²⁹ *Mochenik* [Russ.] is a charlatan.

I felt that I was not ready to intervene as a third party in a role of a mediator in this conflict, a responsibility that I did not foresee and did not stipulate in my ethics approval. However, I decided that I would make sure that Samira is not abused and take her to my place if violence erupts. I realized that my role of a researcher broadened to the role of a friend who wanted to make sure that Samira is alive. I do not want to claim that being with a potential victim and attending, staying, and participating in the calamity of the interviewee is feminist research. I believe that it is axiology, ethics of actions in human action that binds, connects women, and shifts us from the researcher-interviewee position to the position of the subjects in this case.

With Samira's access to her kin networks, the problem was resolved. Her husband brought potatoes home and relative peace was restored at home. Samira's personal story reflects the nature of conflict, power relations, and dynamics within her family. Her story also reflects the market structure and constraints with which she interacts. In her personal story evolving in front of me, Samira moved interchangeably from being a potential victim to having agency, especially when she pooled her social networks.

Samira describes her life by using the pronoun "I" consistently rather than "we" as some female interviewees did. She said, that "I need to sell... but prices went down. I went to the field ..., I did laundry..., When I came back from the field, I felt extremely tired. I cook quickly, and then we went to sleep." In her story, Samira's husband Jasur was always missing in carrying out *dehqonchilik*. Instead, she constantly voiced her criticism against men for not taking financial responsibility to support the families.

One day when I visited Samira, I decided to ask what her husband did. She paused and then said: "He? [*Pause*]. He sleeps." And then Samira laughed. She

explained that he does not care, and Jasur has kidney problems, and, therefore, he does not want to work hard. Jasur brought *mardikors* and delivered food and tea, but Samira supervised all the work of the *mardikors*. In her story, Samira revealed her own inner authority and agency in stressing her new fixed rather than fluid shifting identity and role as the breadwinner in her family. It was apparent for me that Samira as a narrator talked about turning moments in her life and her new role and identity. Her story reflects social changes where she constructs her agency and points to the experience in a specific time of her life by sending across particular messages to inform, explain, prove and reinstate her power.

Conclusion

This research is informed by indigenous epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology. Carrying out research in indigenous communities is a sacred responsibility because it requires building long-term relations and being accountable to these relations and knowledge production. It requires understanding traditional, western, and local knowledges to bond relations with participants. Furthermore, narrative inquiry is linked to knowledge production and power; researchers are co-learners but also knowledge transmitters and knowledge producers with participants. Women's and researchers' epistemology and language can question environmental harm and examine avenues for social justice. Thus, research can empower communities to reflect about environmental peacebuilding, equality, equity and development.

I suggest that an action research paradigm exists in local cultural practices such as female talking circles. Female gatherings are a site for knowledge production,

reflexivity, and action, or *ijtihad*¹³⁰ which is part of a resilient thinking and action.

These female gatherings have a potential to question oppression and transform power structures and hence, empower communities for social change. Women's situated knowledge in Uzbekistan shows commonalities and differences in knowledge and experience which create possibilities for thinking of alternative solutions and reclaiming new voices, inner authority, and power.

Narrative inquiry helped me to examine continuity and discontinuity in rural livelihoods' social change in Uzbekistan. I incorporated narrative inquiry with livelihood, conflict resolution, and feminist theories to explore women's agency and resilience in response to a market economy. This approach serves as theoretical background to my study and puts forward the idea that the narrative approach enriches peace and conflict studies, feminist, and development studies. This narrative approach emerged from the narrative structure of my society, oral traditions, human agency, cosmologies, history, women's stories, and the situated knowledges people experience in a collaborative endeavour to reflect, speak, and act.

In my study I use narrative inquiry as a type of qualitative inquiry embedded in the social life of people that can be characterized, as Susan Chase (2005) suggests, as an "amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by one who lives with them" (p. 651). My standpoint in methodological approaches is that narrative operates within a multi-disciplinary theory, research, and practice of livelihood, empowerment, and conflict resolution.

¹³⁰ *Ijtihad* [Ar.] is the ability to extract and develop legal rules through interpretation (Hallaq, 1984).

Qualitative research functions in the realm of resources¹³¹ which determine how persons and households construct their livelihood portfolio. Livelihood opportunities arise from resources and oral traditions that are influenced and being influenced by social institutions and structures, with a person's reflexive, reasoned, strategic choices and agency to change outcomes. This research methodology allowed me to examine how women make transformatory choices to pursue livelihood activities in order to improve their well-being and gain control over structures that produce inequality. Women's talking circles serve the purposes of an indigenous action research paradigm, empowering women to shift from habituated choices to transformatory choices with the possibility to challenge and undermine social inequalities and choices that reproduce these social inequalities. These inner transformative process empowered women to question their consciousness and sense of self, inner voice and inner authority.

I suggest that an indigenous paradigm research is based on: (1) relational accountability to the cosmos, people, and earth; (2) transformatory knowledge production; (3) reciprocity; (4) learning together; (5) situated knowledges; and (6) networks of socially located knowledges. This paradigm stresses the importance of voice, authenticity, interpretive authority, and representation whereby women are understood as social actors and interpret events and conditions of their lives in their subjective meaning expressed in stories. Women's stories are helpful for the narrators to interpret their issues related to trauma, oppression, and economic injustice; by challenging power relations; and creating meaning, emotions, identity, and memory. Knowledge is produced between the tellers and listeners who are embedded in space, social hierarchy, class, and gender, forming networks of socially located knowledges.

¹³¹ Resources can be natural, physical, human, financial/economic, social, cultural and symbolic.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN'S CONSTRAINTS AND AGENCY IN LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION IN OK YUL

Introduction

Women's agency depends on context-based opportunities and constraints as women seek proactively to make decisions on how to meet their needs and those of family members (Oberhauser, Mandel, & Hapke, 2004). Agency requires strategies – that is, conscious and rationally structured actions aimed at achieving long-term goals (Niehof, 2004). Women use reasoned choices and strategies such as obtaining, using, and managing assets and resources to achieve individual and household security.

Livelihood strategies link, not only to economic capabilities, but also to intangible gains such as voice, leadership, participation in decision-making, social capital, and resources. Livelihood strategies are transformative struggles through which women empower themselves by redefining their identities and relationships with the households' members and communities. Women undertake livelihood strategies which are embedded in place and space; these strategies demonstrate the manner in which spatial processes affect women in diverse ways depending on how identities play out in specific context (Oberhauser, et al., 2004). Thus, livelihood practices may shape and refine space and reformulate power, decision making, and the identity of women.

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines the ways in which changing rural livelihoods (public, private, and informal) are effecting and being affected by socio-economic opportunities. The first section examines livelihoods and how people deal with the vulnerability context looking at such stresses as the border closure with Kazakhstan,

social insecurity, the reduction of biodiversity, migration, decreased agricultural land, and ecology. This is followed by an exploration of diversification issues and poverty in pursuing livelihood strategies. The second section presents three sets of livelihood resilience strategies women pursue: coping, preserving, and accumulating. Women's agency is analyzed within the complex system of relationships among household members, social networks, and state regulations. The third section provides an examination of the intersection of Islam, livelihoods, gender and Islamic conception of an economic system and its meaning embedded in language, space, and culture. Further, the section explores religious women's notions of poverty and the importance of proper budgeting, expenditures, and proper moral ways of living and doing. Finally, notions of *sabr*,¹³² *baraka*,¹³³ *harom*,¹³⁴ and *halol*¹³⁵ are discussed in connection to livelihood choices, relational accountability, and ways of doing and living.

Chapter Thesis

The thesis of this chapter is that women are strategic actors who pursue livelihood activities depending on the availability of resources and their abilities to transform these resources into assets. Women's personal stories show that discourses of socio-economic empowerment are framed through "*harakat, harakat, harakat; harakatda baraka.*"¹³⁶ Women negotiate with families, communities, and markets to maximize their income and improve their household's well-being. *Otins* and their

¹³² *Sabr* [Uz.] is patience.

¹³³ *Baraka* [Uz.] is sacredness.

¹³⁴ *Harom* [Ar.] is forbidden acts.

¹³⁵ *Halol* [Ar.] is proper moral life style.

¹³⁶ In Uzbek, there is a saying *harakat, harakat, harakat; harakatda baraka*. It means action, action, action; sacredness through action.

followers bring notions of *sabr*, *halol*, *harom*, and *savob*¹³⁷ to respond to socio-economic changes and pursue livelihood activities with proper moral values and actions. Women's narratives indicate how they consciously redefine their voices and consequently status, power, and identity within multiple complexities of socio-economic, ecological, political, and cultural changes.

Livelihoods and Dealing with Vulnerability

We have never lived so badly before. This year we had such difficulty. Now it is a crisis. Everyone is in difficulty. I think this is because the *dehqonchilik* did not give us any profit. We planted cabbage but we could not sell it in the bazaar. The price went down. We usually made 7 to 8 to 10 million (U.S. \$3,911). We let the cattle pasture. The price of cabbage per kg was 50 *so'm* or 100 *so'm*. It is so little. It is nothing. If you want to hire a lorry, you should pay 50 000 *so'm* (U.S. \$28). People could not sell cabbage. We planted for one hectare (Mashkura opa).

The major constraint faced by households in Ok Yul is not just the production of agricultural crops but their ability or inability to sell the crops in the local and regional markets. The borders with Kazakhstan and Russia were closed in the summer of 2008, revealing *dehqons'* vulnerability to external economic and political pressures. In the context of this vulnerability, failure in the exchange or market mechanisms acts as a main cause of shock or stress.

Building on the entitlement approach (Sen, 1983), two factors are important to identify households' ability to command subsistence goods (including food) and services: (1) their endowments, that is, what a person possesses, such as the ability to labour, land, and other assets; and (2) their exchange entitlements that is, the opportunities to exchange that exist through production and trade, including employment opportunities which determine the consumption set available to a person.

¹³⁷ *Savob* [Uz.] relates to spiritual merit or reward from God that is bestowed upon the performance of good deeds and piety.

Market prices and structural factors influence the abilities of households to react and/or respond to stresses. According to the estimation of the *dehqon*, 90 percent of the people who planted cabbage under polyethylene during winter 2009 were bankrupt.¹³⁸ However, those who planted cabbage the previous year (2008) profited up to 40 million *so'm* (U.S. \$22,346),¹³⁹ and some of them purchased a house and a car. The uncertainty of trade was evident in the narratives of the *dehqons*; one *dehqon* made the analogy that “planting on land” was like “gambling with cards.”

This insight also suggests that the social contract between private farms and the *dehqons* is under increasing strain due to the lack of opportunities. The new land tenure entails the absence of paternalistic provisions on behalf of private farms. The leasehold arrangement on *plan* does not guarantee the *dehqon* that the farmer will sell the crops and fulfill the plan; they both mutually depend on each other for marketing the products. The leasehold does not provide any social benefits such as keeping the labour book to receive a pension in future and/or other incentives such as permission to utilize the leased land to graze cattle. The transformation in the agricultural system is a radical change in lease-holding arrangements and production that increases the vulnerability of *dehqons* in meeting production quotas where households act as autonomous accounting units.

Globalisation, Seed Markets, and Stratification of Society in Ok Yul

The emergence of Dutch seeds has had a profound impact on the variety of local crops, cropping patterns, labour employment, and the household's ability to purchase foreign seeds in the city of Tashkent. The value of the current world's seed

¹³⁸ Bankrupt means that *dehqons* lost all their investments such as payment for the lease on the land (one million *so'm* – U.S. \$558), purchase of seeds, payment to labourers, and food expenses to feed the labourers.

¹³⁹ I used the rate of the black market, 1,790 *so'm* in 2009. The calculation is approximate for the year 2008.

markets is estimated to be approximately \$22 billion, and increasing. In contrast to other agricultural inputs, seeds hold the potential to permit corporations to establish farming practices and to increase their corporate power within the entire food chain. With the introduction of corporate, foreign seeds and the enlarging scope of patents and monopoly rights, seeds become a main point of proprietary control in the global food order. The institutions that control seeds exercise increasing power over the sectors of farming, food processing, and retail (Kuyek, 2007).

There has been a shift among wealthier *dehqons* from local seeds to Dutch seeds, which generate much higher yields. The crops look more attractive and also fetch a price three or more times higher than local crops.¹⁴⁰ The produce from Dutch seeds was usually marketed to Russia and Kazakhstan while local crops no longer attracted foreign clients and stayed within local markets. For example, the local cauliflower¹⁴¹ is worth 300-600 *so 'm* and Dutch cauliflower 1,700 *so 'm*. The advent of the new seeds resulted in a widening discrepancy among women who gain income from local crops and those who generate income from Dutch seed crops.

The visible increase of wealthy *dehqons* is, in part, the result of the seed market globalisation that has strengthened gendered division of intensive labor which has been going on in Uzbekistan since Soviet times. The gendered division of work among casual labourers was apparent: male *mardikors* are hired to plough land in household plots or farms whereas female *mardikors* are employed for weeding, planting potato seeds in the farm and household plots, and collecting tomatoes in

¹⁴⁰ The local newspaper *People's Voice* (2007) advertised the sale of seed potato produced by the Dutch company Agriko: Escort, Ditta, Estima, Romano, Markies, Kondor, Marlen, Miranka, Marfona, Desiree, and others.

¹⁴¹ Cauliflower is a special occasion food, usually fried in pieces with an egg coating. It was a brand-new food crop and an inherently commercial crop, not a subsistence crop in Uzbekistan. The peasants resent that the price that the so-called "local" cauliflower can fetch is lower than the price the "Dutch" cauliflower can fetch.

greenhouses located in household plots of land. Similar patterns of a gendered division of labour existed in 1970s or 1980s before Dutch seeds came into the country when women were doing the weeding, hoeing, pruning,¹⁴² and most of the cotton-picking. These women also paid less in those times. In new post-Soviet conditions, with new products, the same patterns of gender division are still evident.

Male casual labourers were paid 15,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$8) per day while women performing similar agricultural tasks were paid 34 percent less than men, 10-12,000 *so 'm* per day (U.S. \$5 to U.S. \$6). Many workers come from Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, and the Fergana Valley to perform casual labour. A more recent practice is for the workers to stay in the house to protect it while the owner lives in another house in the same village. The guest workers do not have access to land or to opportunities for alternative earning except small-scale trade activities in bazaars. Some women in Ok Yul thought that the inflow of casual labourers replaced, to a certain degree, the villagers' labour, prompting them to search for non-agricultural livelihood activities.¹⁴³

Ecological Degradation and Food Security

Demographic growth and declining resources increase the *dehqons'* vulnerability by restricting access to farming, and this is a major stress for rural communities. Also, the stress of ecological degradation, such as air and water pollution, resulted in severe ramifications for households in terms of the reduction or depletion of income. *Dehqons* observed that growing garlic became hard because of

¹⁴² To prune a plant is to remove some of the stems or branches or flowers so that the remaining ones will be stronger. Uzbek women do *yagona* (pruning) which involves reducing the number of shoots or stems on the cotton plant.

¹⁴³ The problem in Ok Yul is that the villagers cannot work in Tashkent because of their *propiska* (registration) in Tashkent *oblast*. They are only allowed to work in the Airport, police, and railroad system because these services are located at the border of Tashkent and the village. People in Ok Yul are caught between state policies and their own need to satisfy their interests.

ecological problems (Tursunova, 2012a). Livelihood resilience is built on responding to the change and uncertainty by fostering the process of learning and adaptation (Dietz, Ostrom, & Stern, 2003).

In Ok Yul, the villagers felt extreme heat and strong winds blowing in the afternoon. They also observed that tree leaves were weakened by toxic substances, and they were reluctant to compost those leaves. Strawberries were the most vulnerable crop as they are exposed directly to acid rain. A woman who plants strawberries described: “Now we have acid rains. When acid rain falls, the strawberry looks okay, but it is impossible to eat. The leaves become dark. The crops are spoiled. It happens from time to time, more often than every two years. As a result, we have losses.”

Another phenomenon the locals observed and dealt with was the extreme amount of *shira* (aphids), producing a sweet substance on fruit trees, especially apricot trees. The adaptation to ecological changes differed according to gender. Women responded to the change by washing the trees in the courtyards with water or water with soap relying on indigenous knowledge. Men, on the other hand, sprayed the trees with chemicals in the courtyards, relying on Soviet scientific knowledge.¹⁴⁴

In Ok Yul, the following the manifestations of stress or shock were visible:

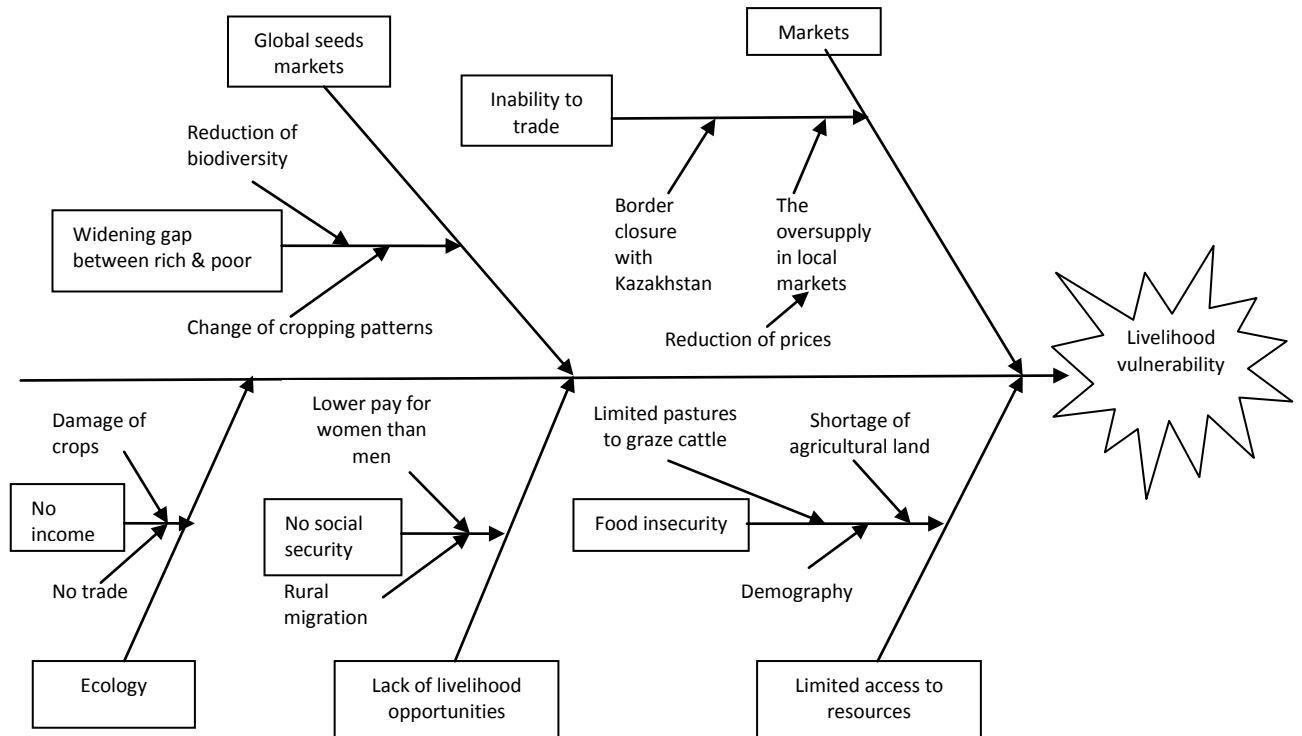
¹⁴⁴ This is not to say that women only use organic methods and men only use non-organic methods. However, scientific methods based on intensive chemical use of agricultural production are more widespread among men. The Soviet educational system aimed to satisfy the demands of the economic plan by producing the required number of experts for specific economic sectors. The content was set by the policies and needs of the Soviet Union as a whole, with only minor regional differences. Moreover, gender imbalance in the distribution of male and female students in the spheres of education was observed (Tursunova & Azizova, 2009). This gender imbalance continues to exist in agriculture. The number of male students majoring in agriculture is four times higher than female students. In 2000/2001, 14.1% women, 85.9% men; in 2001/2002, 14.7% women, 85.3% men; in 2002/2003, 12.6% women, 87.4% men; in 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, 14.8% women, 85.2% men; and in 2005/2006, 13.8% women, 86.2% men (StatOffice, 2007, pp. 93-94).

- (1) *Trade and border closure with Kazakhstan.* The oversupply in the local market and the reduction of prices increased the poverty of rural households. The rural households were not able to sell horticultural produce to Kazakhstan and Russia and went bankrupt.
- (2) *Limited access to resources.* Limited access to resources such as farm land and land for grazing cattle effected people's household food security. There was a declining resource basis and livelihood opportunities because villagers build houses and cities were spreading into former farmland.
- (3) *Global seed markets.* People experienced a reduction in planting of local varieties and as a result, there was a change in cropping patterns. The new system emerged in which farmers or agronomists don't reproduce seed or plants but buy them from a distributor.

Poor households were unable to purchase foreign seeds. The introduction of Dutch seeds led to an increase of the gap between wealthier and poorer *dehqons*. The advent of the new seeds resulted in the widening discrepancy among women who gain income from the local crops and those who generate income from Dutch seeds crops.
- (4) *Ecology.* Various environmental factors, most of which were associated with climate change, impacted women's livelihood strategies and their access to food security. The *dehqons* could not sell damaged crops destroyed by acid rains, extreme heat, and winds.
- (5) *Lack of livelihood opportunities.* There was rural migration to Ok Yul and as result, the village labourers were replaced with outsiders. Gender discrimination against female workers resulted in low paying jobs, no social security or benefits. No labour workbook and no social security existed

between a *fermer* (farmer) and *dehqons* (peasants) which resulted in a broken social contract.

Figure 6. Sources of Vulnerability in Ok Yul



Diversification and Issues

Poverty was not a phenomenon of the entire village of Ok Yul, but rather a characteristic of a few households. These individuals and households pursued diversification for survival as a livelihood strategy because of necessity but not choice. In diversifying for survival, *dehqons* used coping strategies: they borrowed; they compromised consumption and household well-being; and they depleted household assets through the sale of houses, livestock, and land. Some households sold their houses to buy fertilizer, polyethylene, and iron frames (which would be covered in plastic) to put over cabbage for winter planting, and also to pay for labour and leasing land. Some *dehqons* were not able to cope with shocks, and they had to move to apartments and live in the suburbs with no access to land. Other households

sold one part of their *hovli* to put on a wedding, a diversification strategy for survival. Some individuals planned to sell the entire *hovli* so that they could buy an apartment and use the rest of money for putting on a wedding. Those who had already bought a piece of land but did not have means to build a house decided to sell the land. A few households wanted to sell one of the pieces of land to repair the house (fix a leak in the roof, whiten walls, cement the sidewalks in the *hovli*), and build a *molkhona*.¹⁴⁵ *Dehqons* sell their assets as a last-resort coping strategy to survive and maintain their well-being. These strategies are involuntary and reactive responses that can be classified as diversification for survival.

Commonly observed livelihood patterns indicate the dynamics of rural households' vulnerability. The most vulnerable and the poorest are those most intensively dependent on agriculture and most heavily locked into subsistence farming. The poorest households rely on natural resources and have a limited amount of land. The better off households are less dependent on natural resources and have the best access to land, and attain the highest profits from a given piece of land. Citing Gunnar Myrdal, Ellis and Allison (2004) refer to so-called "circular causations" rather than linear relationships between diversification and natural resource access. In other words, those with some assets can make choices, diversify, generate more money, and invest and expand these assets. Those without assets have a hard time initially accumulating anything, let alone building on it. Diversity in a livelihood portfolio and access to resources is mediated by such factors as gender (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Oberhauser, et al., 2004), needs, preferences, and the degree of control of assets (Scoones, 1998). Diversification depends on household composition (number of income earners), generation, the nature of employment (payment in cash or in kind),

¹⁴⁵ *Molkhona* [Uz.] is a stable.

access to land or livestock, and the ability to mobilize labour for farming (Kandiyoti, 1999b). These mediating factors are influenced by historical, political, socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and knowledge-based factors.

In rural areas of Uzbekistan, poor households consist primarily of elderly couples living as a nuclear unit or female-headed households headed by divorced or widowed women. These households utilize the household plot for food consumption, production, and local trade. Many of these households are constrained in the labour force if they do not have sons to plough land and do other hard labour work. In Ok Yul, married daughters are expected to carry out household and agricultural work in their husband's household but they also help their parents in domestic chores such as cleaning the house, doing the laundry, cooking meals, helping in hosting guests, and working in the household plot of land. Due to their labour shortage, such households do not pursue diversification in agricultural activities in farm lands. They mostly concentrate their agricultural activities in the household plots of land.

Three sets of livelihood resilience strategies were found out in the research site: coping (9%), preserving (89%), and accumulating (2%). Different types and amounts of resources and assets and various educational, social, and economic conditions contributed to various personal and household responses to market reforms in Uzbekistan. By 2010, besides the poor and middle class, there is a growing bourgeois class with accumulation strategies built on non-agricultural activities such as furniture-making workshops, a brick-making plant, and cookie-making workshops with modern technology. The cases below highlight the complexity of variations within each response set in accessing, pooling, and controlling the resources to deal with socio-economic and environmental stresses.

Coping Response

Livelihood Resilience: Trade, Knowledge, and Social Networks

The households consisting of old pensioners and/or headed by females are trapped in a cycle of “circular causation,” and rely heavily on subsistence agriculture. They usually plant feed corn,¹⁴⁶ potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, radishes, pepper, and cabbage in the *ogorod*.¹⁴⁷ In the majority of cases, they are short of financial resources to hire *mardikors* to cultivate or harvest crops. Households do not lease the land from farms; they cultivate just the *ogorod* (about 6 *sotka* – 600 square metres). Other, larger pieces of land are abandoned or may be borrowed by the neighbours because women-headed households can take care of the *ogorod* but do not have enough labour to plough the rest of the land they are entitled to.

In households with unemployed family members, the pensions for retired workers provide security in dealing with everyday expenses to buy meat, oil, and bread. The coping strategy of the household members is built on small-scale trade and paid employment in the formal and informal sectors of economy. They also cope through their participation in *gaps*¹⁴⁸ to access lump sums of cash but frequently experience financial limitations that push them to withdraw from their *gap* network. Poor households experience food insecurity and have difficulty in paying utility bills. They tend to postpone carrying out life cycle events such as *beshik to 'y*,¹⁴⁹ *sunnat to 'y*,¹⁵⁰ and marriage, or they have to borrow money for these events.

¹⁴⁶ There is no sweet corn in Uzbekistan.

¹⁴⁷ *Ogorod* [Russ.] is an agricultural plot of land in the *hovli*.

¹⁴⁸ Poor people tend to have small contributions (5,000 *so 'm* – U.S. \$3) and a smaller number of participants (maximum five) in *gap*. The low income gained from small-scale trade and other external stresses described in this chapter do not allow women to continue their participation in *gap*. *Gaps* among poor women last two or three years.

¹⁴⁹ *Beshik to 'y* [Uz.] is a childbirth ritual.

¹⁵⁰ *Sunnat to 'y* [Uz.] is a ceremony of the circumcision of a boy.

Poor households face extreme difficulty in diversifying their livelihood portfolio. They gain income from the small-scale sale of corn, strawberries, radishes, and herbs. The changing ecology increases the vulnerability of households to adapt and diversify due to the lack of material resources and knowledge to build livelihood resilience. The wealthier households build greenhouses and have their horticultural produce grown earlier than the households who planted on land. Moreover, poor households are not able to buy Dutch seeds and grow foreign varieties of produce. The advent of Dutch vegetables, which catch a higher price than local produce, creates a high discrepancy in earnings between households who are able to buy foreign seeds and those poor households planting from seeds saved from last year.

Case 1. "All My Hope was in Corn"

Lobar opa (51 years old) will become a pensioner in four years (2013). She started working in 1975 in a Tashkent textile factory. After giving birth to two daughters (1984, 1988) and working for the next five years, Lobar opa left her job in 1990 just before the break-up of the Soviet Union. Bus fares were rising, and it was inconvenient to take three buses to the city. Her husband Salim aka (65 years old) used to be a firefighter and combined his waged employment with carpentry in the informal sector of the economy. The household relies heavily on his pension, in the amount of 180,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$100). Lobar opa says: "Let Salim aka's pension be strong. We will live on his pension." He continues to do carpentry work in the local community or outside and brings extra income into the *bir qozon* (one pot). They both strategize access to a lump sum of cash through their participation in *gap*. Salim aka is engaged in a classmate *gap* (eight members) for five years, contributing 15,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$8). Last time for his *gap*, he borrowed money from his neighbour whose house he was repairing. Lobar opa participates in a relative's *gap* (18 members) with the

contribution of 10,000 (U.S. \$5) *so 'm*, which she takes from the *bir qozon*. (See Lobar opa's participation in *gaps* in chapter 6).

The family deals with low income and limited human resources by engaging the labour of their two married daughters. They planted corn on March 15 but because of rainy weather the corn ripened in June, one month later than normal. The corn grew after they followed their friend's advice to use nitrogen. As they were not able to fetch a high price for corn at the beginning of May, they sold one sack of corn (25-30 kg) at the end of May for 70 *so 'm* (U.S. \$0.03) per ear. Their neighbour, who started corn in the greenhouse a little bit later, had his corn at the end of May. The neighbour sold corn from local seed for 200 *so 'm* (U.S. \$0.11) per ear while corn from the Dutch seed was worth 1,200-2,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$0.76 – U.S. \$1.11) per ear.

Lobar opa's and Salim aka's daughters also provide help in harvesting corn and radishes for sale, and potatoes for consumption from eight *sotka* (800 square metres) of land (including the house). Their daughters live in the same village in their husbands' households. The family did not plan their daughter's wedding this year because of their financial difficulties. But they changed their mind and decided to put on a wedding and as a result were in debt. The family was not able to recover from this debt because they generated low income from their livelihood activities.

This household demonstrates low resilience and high sensitivity to economic difficulties. Lobar opa thought that "if I sell one ear of corn for 200 *so 'm* (U.S. \$0.11), then I will be able to repay a debt also. I thought that I will get rid of my debt. Now the price in the bazaar has dropped. If the price is low, then we keep corn for ourselves. We will cut it slowly from one side of the plot for cattle. The corn will feed the chicken all the winter. All my hope was in this corn. We sold the corn last year

very well. The corn is late. Our corn is late. Everyone sold their corn. We are the only ones left. We planted our corn earlier than they did, but our corn ripened later.”

In June Lobar opa and Salim aka planted potatoes for household consumption with the help of their daughters. Salim aka ploughed the land and dug holes into which his daughters planted potatoes from eyes or cuttings. The whole family did not plan to plant radishes because their hands and legs hurt from working in damp conditions. However, they changed their livelihood strategy and decided to plant radishes in the fall because corn did not give a profit at all. Lobar *opa* envisions that she will gain “lots of *daromat*¹⁵¹ (income)” that will cover gas and electricity bills.

Livelihood strategies are the outcome of the interaction between a strategic approach to expanded choice (thriving) and a constrained response to a shrinking set of opportunities (coping) (Start & Johnson, 2004). Lobar opa’s and Salim aka’s family diversify for survival, expanding the variety of agricultural crops to generate better income. Yet, they are not exclusively or even primarily dependent on agriculture. They strongly rely on Salim aka’s good pension and the money he makes from carpentry. Both of them renewed their participation in *gaps*, interrupted earlier due to their inability to contribute money to the networks.

The vulnerability of Lobar opa’s and Salim aka’s family increased because they were not able to cope with stress and develop stronger income-generating activities. Davies (1996) defines negative adaptation strategies as those that are pursued when households are not able to recover from stress and carry out livelihood activities with a higher income. Furthermore, Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) explain

¹⁵¹ *Daromat* [Uz.] is profit that may also include expenditure as well. The pensioners report pension as a source of income without considering other incomes (for example, from agricultural plots especially if it is used for household consumption). The waged labourers do not consider income from their employment (paid to the bank account) but rather from the entrepreneurial, agricultural activities and livestock that are paid in cash. In *How to Get it Wrong in Rural Uzbekistan: An Ethnographic Critique of Household Survey Categories*, Kandiyoti (1999a) discusses phenomenological varieties in what interviewees consider as income.

that resilience indicates the ability of the system to absorb change or even exploit change to advantage; while sensitivity relates to the susceptibility of the natural resource base to alter following human action. Lobar opa and Salim aka struggle to adapt to change because of the lack of resources, labour, and knowledge. They summon up their resources to recover from stress to meet their basic needs.

Food Insecurity and Livelihood Collapse

To achieve human security, individuals pursue livelihood and subsistence strategies. Livelihood strategies signify “relative success” in the ways in which they “make people secure and can lead to positive adaptation” (strategies pursued by choice). Subsistence strategies relate to “relative failure” because they “result in greater vulnerability, necessitate the pursuit of negative adaption, and are followed by the poor alone” (Davies, 1996, p. 5). Building on Davies’s resilience framework, Start and Johnson (2004) specify that livelihood strategies imply that persons are capable to enhance security and well-being by accumulating and investing in different forms of capital. Subsistence strategies tend to deplete capital; in a context in which scarce resources are utilized, these strategies may leave little space for accumulation.

In Ok Yul, households that derived most of their income from agricultural activity were more vulnerable to food insecurities and livelihood shrinkage and had difficulties in meeting the day-to-day needs of economically sustaining the household. Impoverished households coped by selling household/family assets such as land, and borrowing from relatives and friends. Because agricultural work on land (not in greenhouses) takes places between March and November, income shrinks in the winter, making vulnerability seasonal. The income reduction decreased household consumption of nutritious food (meat) and also cut their participation in social networks.

Household Composition and the Vulnerability

The old pensioners experience vulnerability if they are not incorporated into the larger household where they access the labour of the younger generations. This is frequently the predicament of those families who do not have sons (Kandiyoti, 1999b). With the increasing economic difficulties, the poor extended households face constraints in land and/or availability of the dwelling for a new couple. The groom's households no longer provide a dwelling and may respond to socio-economic hardships by sending a groom to a bride's house.

In the post-Soviet period an increasing number of brides are hosting an *ichki kuyov*¹⁵² in their household. For groom whose natal family lacks land and cannot provide him with housing, becoming *ichki kuyov* is a response to economic difficulty. Although the old pensioners who lack a son form an extended household that integrates the *ichki kuyov* as male labour, many females of such households experience erosion of the community social support. The wife's well-being worsens when an *ichki kuyov* experiences livelihood collapse or is unable to bring enough income. In this case, a wife and her family members are responsible for the household's well-being. The family of an *ichki kuyov* does not provide much support to his family if he resides in his wife's house.

Power relations and bargaining within the household are essential to the exercise of agency. Sarah Whatmore (1993) specifies that power relations within households cut across gender, generations, and class with different contradictory experiences and needs. Patricia O'Hara (1998) stresses imbalanced bargaining power where taken-for-granted assumptions, negotiation, and conflict shape household processes in fundamental ways. Households may have peculiar dynamics varying

¹⁵² *Ichki kuyov* [Uz.] is an internal husband. In traditional marriages, the groom is responsible for providing accommodation for a new family to live in. In this case, a groom is not able to provide accommodation, and lives with his bride's family.

from, on one end of the continuum, sharing with a high level of trust and reciprocity to, on the other end, patriarchy and accumulation strategies that advantage the farm over the family and take assets away from women. The management of financial resources informs a farm family system, which usually functions as a flexible system of allocation due to income irregularities. The next case show how these factors relate to different identities, social statuses, interests, and the motivations of *ichki kuyovs*. These households experience conflicts accompanied by moments of calamity and tension; women address these conflicts to keep their families alive.

Case 2. "I live with an ichki kuyov"

Anor opa is a 63-year-old widowed woman. She receives a pension in the amount of 130,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$73). She used to work in a dressmaking atelier making lots of money. At that time she did not know that she would have such a small pension. In 1990, Anor opa stopped and then restarted planting strawberries because she took care of her daughter who became sick. She borrowed money from friends to cover the medical expenses which amounted to 300,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$167). She started planting strawberries in September on two *sotka* (200 square meters) of *ogorod* which gave her a bad yield. She found out from neighbours that she should plant strawberries during *chilla*¹⁵³ instead of in September. In 1994 she became seriously ill with breast cancer at the time when coupons were introduced and all money was devalued.¹⁵⁴ She was able to withdraw money from the bank to use for her operation. She reflected on how difficult it was for her to maintain the well-being of her household with her health conditions.

¹⁵³ *Chilla* [Uz.] is the hottest forty days of summer.

¹⁵⁴ In 1993, the new Uzbek currency (*so'm* coupons) was introduced temporarily.

When I met Anor opa for the first time, she immediately started telling me how Temur, the *ichki kuyov*, does not bring enough income and does not care about the household. I felt that she was nervous, anxious, upset, and was experiencing an enormous stress from the situation she was in. In her personal story, Anor opa described her struggle with complex processes of power negotiation and bargaining with the *ichki kuyov*, who depletes her resources:

I live with an *ichki kuyov* and he does not have any sympathy towards me even though he is my nephew. Surprisingly, he does not have any sympathy towards me even though he is my sister's son! The young generation is like that! He does not understand that I am half dead! He got married to my daughter and he is very young. Both of them are young. It is just inappropriate to sit on his wife's shoulders and other women. Everything is turned upside down. If before men worked and brought money home, presently women do all the work. Men used to do a lot of agricultural work; now women do it. Men come to the wife's house and have neither a job nor work in the house.

It is hard to say something to him. He is lazy! He does not want to work! I told him several times to do this or that. He got upset. He also went to his parental home several times. He stays there for two months, then he does not feel comfortable there and comes back. He left in the winter for two months and we were having such a difficult time feeding ourselves. My son-in-law does not do anything. If I ask him to do something, he takes ten days to do it. Now he is on sick leave, which means he will not have money. I asked him to cut a poplar branch and he did when Kamola (her adopted daughter) told him. He did only after ten days. It is so difficult to live with this *ichki kuyov*. Your whole nervous system breaks!

Anor opa pursues a set of resilience-building strategies by engaging in small-scale trade of strawberries that reach a high price by contrast to other fruits. She sells bundles of corn at a rate of 500 *so'm* (U.S. \$0.27) to neighbours who have cattle. She plants a few tomatoes and pumpkins in her small *ogorod* of two *sotka* (200 square metres). She plants strawberries and garlic in between to protect the garlic from snails.¹⁵⁵ She sells these strawberries at the roadside for 8000 *so'm* (U.S. \$4) per kg and buys basic food for the household consumption. Anor opa is the woman who keeps this family – including her two year-old grandson – alive.

¹⁵⁵ Planting strawberries with garlic is an indigenous knowledge that passed from one generation to another.

Anor opa had her goals, hopes, and expectations that Temur, whom she took in, would provide financial support and be a breadwinner. She thought that her nephew, as her relative, would be of greater help than anybody else. Instead, as a single woman, she still works and supports the household. Anor opa is in her 60s, a time when women retire from work and, as in the role of mother-in-law, have more time for rest.

The key issue in this conflict is the ownership of property. Temur's vulnerability is that he does not own a house with a courtyard. Anor opa, as a single woman, is a legal owner of a property. Anor opa will pass this property to her daughter to ensure her safety and well-being. The property symbolizes the ownership of the physical place by a woman, not a customary pattern of property ownership, in contrast to traditional marriages when sons inherit land.

Anor opa, like other households with an *ichki kuyov*, regards this situation as worse for herself than if her daughter had gone to live at the husband's house. Anor opa must take all the financial burden to feed the family. If she had a married son with a daughter-in-law living with her, they would be the main providers and supporters of the family. When Temur is upset with her, he goes to his natal home and stays there for some time. Daughters-in-law usually go home when they feel oppressed and voiceless. These women know that they may not come back to their in-laws' house. Temur resists the power of Anor opa who has a major voice in the decision-making of the household. The *ichki kuyov's* strategy of going to his natal home is similar to that of daughters-in-law, but also different in this family in terms of outcomes. Anor opa still takes him in for the sake of her daughter and a grandson. The *ichki kuyov* negotiates power with his mother-in-law by moving in and out from the family, but

still he cannot balance it. Anor opa felt that her *ichki kuyov* did not have much interest and motivation to support his mother-in-law and perhaps even his own family.

Trade of Local Products and Diversification

Feminist geographic studies investigate the interrelationship between livelihood opportunities and mobility for economic gains (G. Sen & Grown, 1987), especially where trade of horticultural produce is one of the most widespread activities among women. In Ok Yul, women cultivate herbs in their *ogorod* for sale in bazaars in Tashkent. They sell their herbs in bazaars and/or from home to other women who will resell them at the bazaars. Women sell herbs from houses because they do not have time to sell them in the bazaars; they may be pensioners or women who work in the formal or informal economy and also perform household duties. Some women and a few men bring their herbs to bazaars at five o'clock in the morning and sell them wholesale to women who will resell the products during the day.

Similar livelihood patterns of local trade among women are found in the Khorezm region; yet the major difference is that many Khorezm women tend to expand their livelihood portfolio by migration to Kazakhstan and/or Russia for agricultural or non-agricultural trade (Tursunova, 2008d). Consequently, economic constraints enhance the mobility of women, but the degree of livelihood resilience may fluctuate depending on participation in the workforce, availability of time and social networks.

Livelihood choices and opportunities and, consequently, livelihood resilience fluctuate in accordance with government policies. In 2009, the irregular border closure with Kazakhstan affected the lives of *dehqons* dramatically; many could not sell their produce wholesale to people who transported that produce by train to sell in

Kazakhstan. The local market was oversupplied with locally grown produce and, as a result, prices dropped significantly. Many *dehqons* went bankrupt. A few were able to sell their horticultural produce to Kazakhstan.

The gendered nature of the informal economy illustrates that women experience inequality in the goods they sell and social benefits they receive. From my observations, I estimate that 99 percent of the traders specialising in the sale of horticultural produce are women; the lucrative trade of construction materials and home appliances is carried out only by men in local markets. Hence, unequal income between women and men reduces women's well-being, voice, and social status in the family. Women's human security is also vulnerable because many do not have any social protection, such as a pension, family allowances, or child benefits. If in Soviet times women received child benefits through their work, nowadays the local administration distributes child benefits. Young women with children reported that they do not have child benefits because they live in middle-income families. Women's rights are violated in accessing social benefits that improve the health of children. Most women do not experience the mobility restrictions of their male household members to sell their produce in bazaars in city of Tashkent. Yet, gender ideology exists in many families; men forbid women to travel far, let alone cross borders, either to go for education or to visit their natal family.

Women's trade activities are bound to diverse cultural knowledge systems. The indigenous knowledge system interacts with other ethnic patterns of food consumption. Women sell green onions, dill, parsley, and celery that are used in national Uzbek, Russian, and other cuisines. Women usually have a small amount of spinach for trade because it is used in Russian cuisine. Only Russians buy spinach, with which they make *shi* soup. Although Uzbek households grow local spinach, they

do not possess knowledge about how to use it in their meals and/or they do not choose to use it in their meals. Therefore, the vast majority of spinach is exported to Russia and Kazakhstan because it will not sell well on the local market.

Two examples below demonstrate the complexity of carrying out local trade in combination with other public and informal activities which affect the well-being of women and their households.

Case 3. “Ya prisluga nomer 1” (Russ., “I am servant number 1”)

Gulya opa is 53 years old, three times divorced, and lives in an old house. Her family used to live in this house before her mother and father and some siblings together built and moved into a new house. Her two daughters got married and the youngest of the two, Indira (23 years old), lives with her and works in the service sector. Gulya opa is ashamed of her *hovli*, which is full of tall weeds that she bundles and sells as brooms to her neighbours (300 *so'm* each – U.S. \$0.16).

I saw her at her mother’s *hovli* when she was weeding potatoes. She told me: “*Ya prisluga nomer 1*. I do all the work here. I cook. I clean. I work in the *ogorod*. They cannot live without me!” Her mother lives with Gulya opa’s sister and an *ichki kuyov*. Gulya opa cleans, cooks, harvests radishes for trade, and grows potatoes for the extended household’s consumption in her mother’s *hovli*. As Gulya opa experiences a shortage of labour, she mobilises her livelihood activities, not in agricultural production, but in trade. At the end of May when the radishes were ripe in her mother’s *hovli*, she spent several days picking them, making bundles, and washing them. Her pregnant sister Sitora was able to help by making bundles. She thinks that working on the land restrains her from generating income from trade as she could make a greater profit by reselling produce.

Because of Gulya opa's epilepsy, which began five years ago, she receives a monthly pension in the amount of 104,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$78). For 25 years she worked in hospitals as a surgical nurse, and now she gives injections to her neighbours; they pay 300-500 *so'm* (U.S. \$0.16 – \$0.25) depending on the amount they can afford or bring some food. She reflects: "People respected me and begged me to do something for them. But now my life changed so much. If before people begged me in the hospital, here I have to call clients to buy herbs. This is life." She was silent for a minute and then smiled, and continued to talk.

Gulya opa and I left the house at 5:00 a.m. with two bags of herbs. We carried 22 bunches of parsley and 32 bunches of celery that she took from her neighbours, to the main road. We thought to catch a car there if her neighbour with a small DAMAS van, who usually gives a ride to her for 500 *so'm*, did not show up. When Gulya opa goes to the bazaar, she buys herbs from other women who came to the bazaar at 5:00 – 6:00 a.m. to sell their herbs to other traders for resale. One small bundle of parsley, celery, dill, lettuce, or green onions is sold for 30-40 *so'm* (U.S. \$0.02), and spinach for 50 *so'm*. Gulya opa buys about 30 bunches each of dill, spinach, and salad. She bargains the price of dill with a male trader¹⁵⁶ and asks the seller to give a verbal agreement to the price (Uz., *rozi bulish kerak*). They shake hands as a symbol of agreement. She resells each bundle of herbs for 200 *so'm* (U.S. \$0.11). Her *daromat* ranges from 15,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$7) to 25,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$14) per day. She needs to cover the cost of herbs, travel expenses, and lunch. For lunch she has two *pirozski*¹⁵⁷ for 400 *so'm* each. She buys oil, sugar, and bread for joint consumption by her mother's household members and her family as she and her daughter have meals there.

¹⁵⁶ It was very rare to see male traders of herbs in bazaar at 5:00 a.m.

¹⁵⁷ *Pirozski* [Russ.] is fried pastry with meat and potatoes.

Gulya opa keeps the rest of the money for herself. She intensifies her trade activity by selling herbs daily during the summer to save money and to provide a wedding for her daughter. She also cooks *manti*¹⁵⁸ for neighbour's feasts, and gives injections to the neighbours.

One of our conversations took place in her old house. I was holding yarn in my hands, and she was pulling it to make balls. She was preparing this yarn to knit during her stay in the hospital for two weeks. While she was pulling the yarn, she told me that usually in the winter she knits sleeveless pullovers from yarn that she buys for 6,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$3) per kg in the city. She sells one item for 15,000-20,000 *so'm* depending on the amount of the yarn used. During the day, she cleans the house, washes the clothes, cooks, and, in between, knits. She sells her products to the neighbours or in the bazaar. She further augments her income with the sale of washing powder she buys in the city and then resells to the local community. Gulya opa charges 3,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$2) for 1 kg.

On her own Gulya opa built a two-room house in her *hovli*. She wants to finish the construction of the house before her daughter's wedding. She already bought all the construction materials, but needs to earn some money to pay to the workers and feed them. The wedding was postponed to the next year.

It seems that Gulya opa is poor and that is also how the villagers perceive her. When there was a funeral, a neighbour gave her one of three pieces of fabric that is usually hung at the door. This piece of fabric is usually given to the poor. The villagers recognize that she works hard, runs two households, and has an *ichki kuyov* in her mother's family. She does not have sons and thus has a labour shortage. They

¹⁵⁸ *Manti* [Uz.] is steamed dumplings with ground beef or lamb with chopped onions.

think that all her livelihood activities are aimed for *tirikchilik*.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, livelihood scholars would also likely see these livelihood activities as diversification for survival.

In fact, Gulya opa is entrepreneurial and calculates where to best spend her time in order to make money. She is saving and investing money in life cycle events, and in the construction of her new house where she plans to live by herself, without an *ichki kuyov*. She has multiple sources of income depending on the season and it seems to me that she is diversifying for choice to make a profit, not because she is just trying to survive. She is transforming her resources into assets to achieve her personal goals.

Case 4. Livelihood Dilemmas and Marrying the Forbidden Other

“I became invisible! So invisible! I decided to live for myself!”¹⁶⁰ said Sitora with despair when I met her. The fact that I was not married served a bridge for us to talk about the marriage issues Sitora and I faced equally after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sitora just got married at the age of forty but experienced lots of conflicts with her extended household members. She works at the airport and combines her public employment with informal activity, growing herbs and radishes for local trade with her sister Gulya (See the above-mentioned case “Ya prisluga nomer 1”).

Sitora’s husband Murad (36 years old) from the Fergana Valley resides in Sitora’s mother house. He is an *ichki kuyov*. Murad makes roof and water pipes from iron but he does not have enough knowledge to make them properly. He worked at Sitora’s neighbour’s house and did not make the air venting system correctly. The

¹⁵⁹ *Tirikchilik* [Uz.] is survival.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Sitora.

neighbour did not pay him and had to ask another master to fix the problem. For Murad this is a second marriage approved by an *imam* in the *nikokh*, the religious ceremony of the wedding. His first family lives in the Fergana Valley with his parents. Sitora embraced this polygamous marriage happily despite the opposition from her family members. Her ultimate goal was to have a family and children.

When I asked her how she transformed this conflict with her family members to let her marry, she said in Russian: “I put on everyone!¹⁶¹” Sitora stressed seizing power and moving in the direction to shape her life as she desired. She indicated in her personal story how she decided to live for herself which is a moment of consciousness-raising leading to action:

My family is the reason that I did not marry! No one said to me, “Marry.” I was so stupid. I worked so hard. I worked on the land and planted fennel, radishes, and took them to the market to sell. I worked in the wet land and got sick.

My sister Gulya’s children got married, and we supported all the weddings here. She does not have a husband, and we helped her so much. We planted crops, and with the money gained, we conducted weddings for her children. Gulya has three daughters. Two daughters got married here, and we gave them everything. I bought furniture, clothes, and took it to her daughter Zulhimor’s house. Gulya does not realize that we helped her so much.

I worked so hard and all my brothers and sisters took my work for granted. I became **invisible! So invisible!** [Sitora stressed]

I decided to live for myself. I became afraid that I would be alone all my life after my mother passed away. Who will care about me? My sisters and brothers have their own families. Maybe they will see me once in a month, and say, “Are you ok?” and that is it.

I did not want to marry. I was so stupid! But when I realized that time is passing. I could be left alone. And I decided to get married.

I want to have a child. My husband is four years younger than me. My husband is from the Fergana Valley. He lays roofs and makes iron things for the house. He lives in our house. I have two rooms, and my elder brother has two rooms attached to mine.

My sisters and brothers and the whole family made my life miserable! [Breathing heavily]. They did not let me marry, saying that this young man is from another *oblast* [region], and is a *kishloki* [villager]. My eldest brother Karim was against my marriage because he does not have a dwelling in this courtyard. My younger brother agreed to my marriage because he has two rooms here, and he did not care who I am going to marry. Now he lives in his

¹⁶¹ “*I polojila na nih!*” [Russ.] is translated “I put on everyone.” This means “I fucked everyone.”

wife's house because she could not stand the workload she was supposed to do here.

Once she cooked potatoes for herself in the kitchen and time came for lunch. I said that our *kenai* [sister-in-law] cooked something in the kitchen. My *kenai* did not like what I said and told my elder brother, Sardor. Sardor and I quarrelled and he hit me. I fell down into the river next to the house. My mother said to Sardor; "Let your child never be born" [*Iloim bolasiz utkin* in Uzbek].

Nortoji opa, Sitora's mother, cursed her son a lot. Cursing is a common practice. Sardor's pregnant wife miscarried at about eight months, and Sitora attributed it to being cursed. The young family felt they were punished with losing their child.

Sitora told me that everything returned to Sardor because he hit her. Sitora said: "After this accident, his hand was swollen, and up to now he has some mark on his hand!" This mark on Sardor's hand is a symbolic demonstration of losing one's power in a family dispute. It seems to me that cursing was a response to conflict that was more inclined to punitive justice where punishment comes from the universe, or destiny, as a confirmation that her interpretation is true one.

Sitora explained to me proudly how she met her husband. The topic of sexuality and her body was a cross-cutting theme in her story. In her narrative she shifts from a description of her victimhood as an abused woman and a family laborer to her agency as a woman. She describes her romantic encounter with her husband, characterizing her body postures that underlined her body and conveyed her sexuality. She proved to her husband that she is "*shustrii*"¹⁶² and hard working to win his heart.

I have a close girlfriend, Karima, who passed my mobile phone number to my husband. My husband called me, and we decided to meet near a petrol station which is close to my house. He does not have a place in Tashkent. I put on a white tight skirt which underlined the beautiful shape of my body. My bottom could be seen well. I wore a top with an open back. It was also tight. I had a golden belt that underlined my figure.

¹⁶² *Shustrii* [Russ.] is fast.

When I came to the meeting place, I saw a man in sun glasses who came with a Nexia¹⁶³ car. I thought, “he is so ugly. I will not marry him.”¹⁶⁴ I thought, “I will not date him and do not need to spend much time.”

He asked me where to go. As I could not suggest something, he took me to a café. I asked him not to order much. We ordered *shashlik*, bread, and tea. I went to wash my hands before eating the food. There was an aquarium there with a fish of red and other colors. I bent to see the fish. While I was watching the fish, Marat [*Sitora's husband*] was looking at my body. When I bent over, I saw him looking at me. He liked my body.

We talked a little bit, and he said that he likes me. I asked him how he can like someone if he saw only for few minutes. He said that he likes me. In few days he invited me to swim. I put my swimming suit in a bag, collected some things, and went to the river with him and his young friend whom he was jealous of.

Men like fast and caring girls. I went to my husband's place and cooked for him. I cleaned, washed his clothes and dishes. He said that I was *shustrii*.¹⁶⁵ He realized that I am fast. Also a man likes a woman who knows how to sleep [*have sex*]. His first wife said that if he had got married to *beva hotin* [*a woman without husband but who has children*], it would have been more appropriate. It means that he helped someone. My husband does not live with his wife. His wife does not know how to sleep with him. A man wants a woman who knows how to sleep. His wife stays at home, wears baggy clothes, and does not look good.

Sitora continued telling her story by moving to the story of her wedding. She stressed the ritual gift exchange that took place between her family members, classmates, and friends; they helped her by bringing food and gifts. Sitora used to purchase gifts for classmates before the ritual gift exchange took place when her turn to get married came. Her *gap* network was of great support; they purchased a carpet and delivered it before the wedding took place.

My groom came twice to my house before the wedding and told my mother that he likes me. He wanted to marry me and be her son. We arranged a date for a wedding. The wedding was financed by me [*some pause*] and my husband too. I bought curtains. My classmates who play *gap* with me brought a carpet before the wedding. Sardor brought 10 kg of meat for a wedding and was here during the wedding helping with its organization. I made a salad, *Pentuza*.¹⁶⁶ One of my friends made a big bowl of *Olivie*¹⁶⁷ salad. My sister-

¹⁶³ Nexia is a luxury car.

¹⁶⁴ Our conversation was in Uzbek. However, Sitora sometimes switched to Russian. She said in Russian: “*Takoi urod. Ya zamuj za nego ne vidu.*” He is so ugly. I will not marry him.

¹⁶⁵ *Shustrii* [Russ.] is fast. In my conversation with Sitora, she indicated that she was *shustrii*, good in cooking and performing household chores. However, she switched from household chores to sexuality implicitly.

¹⁶⁶ *Pentuza* salad is composed of thin noodles, carrot, coriander, herbs.

in-law Shoirra prepared some baked goods. She said that someone took away her baked cakes. I did not care if she brought something or not. We had such a big wedding, and a lot of people came.

The property conflict over resources was escalating in the family. Instead of living in her husband's house, Sitora stayed at her place with her husband. She has less conflict with her older brother Sardor because he owns a piece of the land and two rooms of the house. His wife Sharipa opa locked these two furnished rooms so that no one can access them. She opens these doors only when life cycle events are carried out so that there will be enough space for the guests. Sardor now lives in his wife's house in the city just next to the village, and is an *ichki kuyov*. He is a driver and suffers from alcoholism. His wife Sharipa opa works at the airport and participates in three *gaps* (See chapter 6). She is the main breadwinner in her family.

Sitora's major conflict is with her oldest brother, Karim aka, who claims land. He used to live in the house where his sister Gulya now resides (*See the above-mentioned case "Ya prisluga nomer 1"*). He and his wife Guzal decided to move to the city because the house was too old. They now live in Guzal's apartment which makes Karim aka an *ichki kuyov* as he did not provide the customary housing. They left the house to their extended family members and took a Moskvich car. Karima aka's parents made a deal: Karim gives up a claim to the *hovli* in exchange for that car. Karim aka was instigated by his wife Guzal to claim the land. She was perceived by the villagers as an "anaconda" who triggered the whole conflict.

Sitora describes the conflict in her story:

The family members do not leave me alone! They do not think about my happiness! What they need is their share from this house. I worked here, cleaned the house, and repaired it. I spent all my labour for it, and they do not think about it! In our community there are so many grooms who live in the house of a bride!¹⁶⁷ I am not the only one! My brother Sardor also lives in his

¹⁶⁷ *Olivie* salad is composed of potatoes, beef, green beans, carrot, and mayonnaise.

¹⁶⁸ *Ichki kuyov* [Uz.] is an internal husband. A husband who lives in his wife's parents' house instead of his own house with his wife.

wife's house. Why can't I let someone live with me? They are afraid that if my husband will be registered here, he will have a share from this house too. My brother took all the wood to his wife's house and builds the house. He can live with her there.

I asked my mother to check all the documents and register the house in my name. My mother does not worry about that. She asked me if I think she will die soon. She tells me: "No one tells you to leave the house. Live here."

But she does not understand that the entire problem is with the house now, and we need to make all the documents legal. We have an order for a piece of land. On the order we have one amount of land, but in reality it is smaller. Our house is number 5, and my brother's house is number 1. People from the gas committee come, and my mother pays for the gas. I think the documents are wrong because she pays for house number one instead of five which is our house. If I say something to her, she says, "Yeee. What do you know?" She thinks I do not know anything.

Sitora recognises the importance of her economic struggle for power which is masked under social and gendered norms which privilege men's socio-economic interests rather than her individual goals and interests. She also wants to have a family and a child. She realizes all the constraints: her husband has a hard time finding jobs and does not support the family; he does not have property in Tashkent or in her village. He is landless and propertyless. Sitora does her best to save her husband's face in front of her community. She sacrifices herself but also states that one day if she does not like how things go, she will say: "*Idi k chertu.*"¹⁶⁹

In the perception of Sitora's family members and villagers, Marat is the *Other*, from another region, from another *kishlok*. The villagers told me that Sitora covered all the wedding costs by herself. He did not give *kalym* and *sut puli*¹⁷⁰ to Sitora's mother, which meant that he is poor. The neighbours think that he is such a burden because he does not earn money. Sometimes he brings his *shogirt*¹⁷¹ to Sitora's place and Sitora has to feed two men. Once when he left home for the Fergana Valley, he

¹⁶⁹ *Idi k chertu* [Russ.] is "go to hell."

¹⁷⁰ *Sut puli* [Uz.] is milk money. *Sut puli* is given to the bride's parents for raising their daughter. It is usually a small amount of money.

¹⁷¹ *Shogirt* [Uz.] is an apprentice. Usually the working team consists of a *master* (Russ. master) and a *shogirt*.

took a sack of potatoes from Sitora's house. Each time Marat leaves for the Fergana Valley, he tries to take something from this house and bring it to his natal house.

Marat does not help in the *ogorod* because, as he explained, he has never done agricultural work. Sitora and Gulya plant radishes, potatoes, and herbs. Gulya sells produce in the bazaar. They are constrained by labour resources especially when land should be ploughed. Sardor hires male *mardikors* to plough the land and female *mardikors* to weed. Gulya and Sitora feed and pay the *mardikors*. Because Marat does not work on the land, one woman commented that "even a cucumber does not grow in a garden" meaning that he grows nothing in Sitora's household plot of land. Marat brought five small geese into the house and built a tiny coop for poultry from branches. In a few days the family did not have food to feed the poultry, which were running around hungry, according to Sitora's mother. Despite their criticising and gossiping about Marat, the villagers invited him to life cycle rituals. They wanted to support Sitora and show their respect. As some of them said, "We do not have a choice. We should invite Marat to our ceremonies."

Sitora's extended household has three *ichki kuyovs* comprising of her husband and two brothers who often do not bring significant income to their families. Sitora and Sharipa work in the airport and earn about the same income. Guzal is a school teacher with three children. She lives on her and her husband's salary. Sitora is in extreme difficulty because her husband, as one neighbour said, "eats what she [Sitora] earns." Sitora participated in a small gap network consisting of five members. She could not contribute money and gave up. The wealthiest family is Sharipa's family; she participates in three *gaps* and rotates money fast. Her two children grew up, and her son works and brings income.

Sitora points out that the socio-economic situation changed and therefore so many households have *ichki kuyovs*. With a shortage of land and houses, the cultural practices of marriage change. Women have to claim property rights to secure their well-being. Women in Ok Yul stressed that, according to Islam, it is the responsibility of brothers to support sisters, especially if they are divorced or widowed. Women noticed that it is harder to expect help from brothers than before, and that they have to rely on themselves. Thus, they claim their property rights and a right to live in their natal house. Women who live with *ichki kuyovs* support their families and also transform culture and cultural practices.

On the whole, new land reforms which took place after Uzbekistan gained Independence in 1991 had an impact on well-being and food security. In the rural area examined in my study, these land restructuring reforms had a specific effect on women's lives as well as the members of their households. Women from low-income households witnessed reduced access to land due to population growth, growing scarcity of available agricultural land, and increasing prices to rent farm land. They had difficulty buying seeds and hiring labour to plant crops. Families were constrained to diversify livelihood activities into agricultural, informal, and formal economic sectors in order to survive. They usually experienced problems getting employment and had to sell off their assets to cope with economic challenges.

Households' abilities to access land depended on land reforms and people's capital. Low-income families often used household plots of land to ensure food security. They planted corn, tomatoes, potatoes, pepper, and radishes for household consumption and sale. In addition, the inability to participate in *gap* and other social and economic networks due to low income disadvantaged women's economic

opportunities because they did not have a space to accumulate knowledge about crops, market prices, and community events.

Figure 7. Characteristics of the Poor Households

	Characteristics of the poor households
1.	Unable to exchange products with markets
2.	Feminisation of labour
3.	Poor health and inability of taking care of health issues
4.	Elders perform agricultural work because of necessity but not choice
5.	Absence of knowledge or limited knowledge
6.	Inability to hire <i>mardikors</i>
7.	Strained in paying utility bills
8.	Postponed life cycle events or borrow money to deliver an event
9.	Debt
10.	Late crop harvesting
11.	Rarely have cattle (maximum 2) and poultry (maximum 5)
12.	Food insecurity
13.	Experience difficulties cultivating <i>ogorod</i> due to labour shortage in the family
14.	High reliance on pension
15.	Do not have sons or their married sons do not cohabit with parents
16.	Married daughters help elders with household and agricultural work
17.	Do not have resources to build a greenhouse
18.	Unable to buy Dutch seeds
19.	Small social networks
20.	Negotiation, bargaining among household members
21.	Borrowing money to cover basic needs
22.	Making strategic choice to save and invest
23.	Unable or constrained to pay <i>kalym</i> or <i>sut puli</i>

Preserving Response

Intermediate households seek to diversify livelihood activities and expand their resource basis. They combine intensive agricultural work during the summer and fall with paid employment. In the informal economy, women are engaged in tailoring, baking, knitting, and trade. In the public sector, women work as teachers and nurses. In the private sector, they work in textile factories or bakeries. Men work as construction workers and drivers and perform agricultural work in the informal economy. Men also work in private shops. In Ok Yul some men and women work in the service sector for the railroad or at the airport.

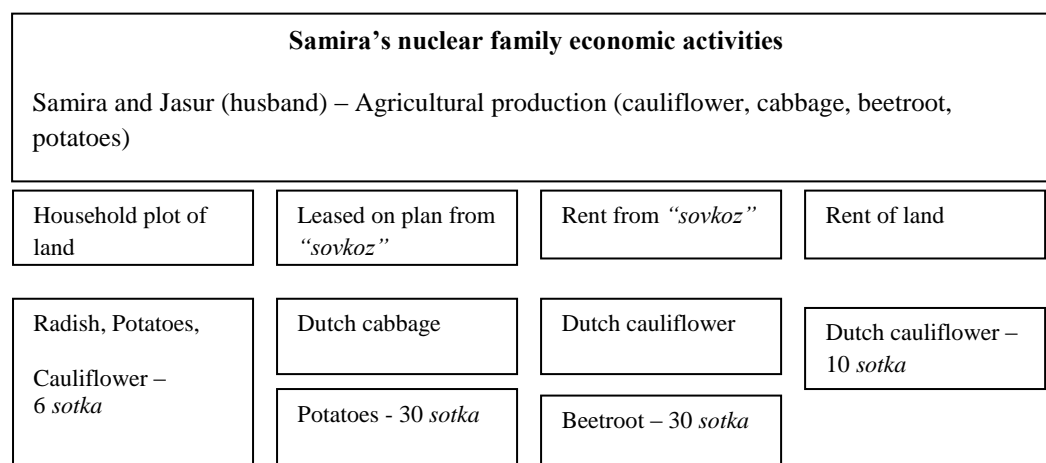
Besides utilizing their household plot intensively, households with intermediate income also lease land on rent or plan from private farms. They rarely rent out their land to someone else. These households rely on kin and other social networks in accessing labour; they are able to hire *mardikors*. These households sell agricultural and non-agricultural produce but do not run village shops or workshops. These households may have a small number of livestock.

In the Tashkent *oblast* these households vary in livelihood resilience strategies. Middle-income households engage in local trade of local produce and generate substantial income with Dutch agricultural produce for trade in Kazakhstan and Russia. High income generation depends on foreign seeds. Lacy (2009) argues that power concentrated in transnational organizations maintains the worldwide ownership of economic activity and intensifies social relations in local communities. The structure of the work, the generation and dissemination of knowledge through science and technology, production, distribution, and consumption of food are critical factors affecting the identity and the empowerment of local communities. The following examples show different locally situated livelihood activities, and knowledge and trade patterns that translate to the different determinants of well-being.

One approach that studies of women's livelihood in Central Asia take is to focus their attention on women as victims confronted with declining social support, deteriorating infrastructure, and a growing problem of poverty (Gomart, 2003; Kuehnast, 2003). In contrast to this approach, other studies started indicating the multiplicity of factors affecting women's engagement in the workforce and their role in alleviating economic pressures of the household consumption, as well as the intra-household relations and decision-making processes; other factors include the role of social networks and inter-household relations of mutual help, transfers of gifts, cash,

and loans (Howell, 1996; Werner, 1997). Similar to Kabeer (2000) who associates the paid employment of women with increasing power to choose even in situations of existing constraints, I take the women-as-agents approach to demonstrate how women pursue multiple strategies to negotiate, bargain, comply, resist, defend, and pursue their individual and collective interests.

Case 5. Livelihood Diversification, Strategies



Samira,¹⁷² who is 32 years old, and who started her teaching career in the kindergarten for four years after her marriage, now works as a *dekhon* (peasant). She quit her job because of low wages; she realized that working in the kindergarten will not enable her to build a house or conduct weddings and other events. She had a discussion with her husband about the low incentives, and they jointly agreed that doing *dehkonchilik* is the best livelihood activity. Samira told me that she had never worked on the land even though she lived in the neighbouring *kishlok* because her father earned a good income by building roofs and did not let his children work in damp conditions.

¹⁷² See Samira's participation in a *gap* network in Chapter 6.

Samira used to live with her two other *ovsuns*,¹⁷³ their husbands, children, and parents-in-law. She learned agricultural work from her father-in-law who acknowledged her hard work by saying to neighbours: “She is my son, she is my daughter.” Because she worked hard planting tomatoes, eggplants, cauliflower, and cabbage, the pooled financial resources in one *qozon* in the extended household were allocated to Samira and her family’s purchase of land and the construction of the house. Samira, her husband Jasur, their 11-year-old daughter Feruza and 10-year-old son Akram have been residing separately from the extended household for six years.

Samira and Jasur leased 40 *sotka*¹⁷⁴ of land on plan from a private farm and planted Dutch sprouts of cabbage; 50 *sotka* of Dutch cauliflower on lease, 30 *sotka* of beetroot on lease; and 30 *sotka* of potatoes on plan. The work for Dutch cauliflower and cabbage started in February, beetroot in May, and potatoes in June. The winter cauliflower and cabbage ripen in May, and Samira harvested those herself. She or her children safeguard the field from thieves and cattle. Occasionally she picks cauliflower for her husband to sell in a bazaar in Tashkent. In May, they had already sold 400 heads of cauliflower for 1700 *so ’m* (U.S. \$1) per piece with about 200 cauliflower heads left in the field for future sale. Because it was Dutch and not local cauliflower and Samira knew how to protect the crop from the sun so that the plants do not turn yellow, the price for cauliflower was high. The yellow cauliflower was sold for 200-300 *so ’m*.

With the intensification of agricultural work that requires cash, the household experiences financial constraints in the summer. The profit from the sale of crops is spent purchasing manure, chemical fertilizer, seeds, renting land, and paying utilities (gas and electricity). The leftover money is used for food consumption, life cycle

¹⁷³ *Ovsun* [Uz.] is a sister-in-law.

¹⁷⁴ *Sotik*, pl. *sotka* [Uz.] is one hundredth of a hectare.

rituals, and other expenses. This summer they spent 800,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$446) for registering the house in Jasur's name because the house belonged to Jasur's father who passed away. For carrying out the *kirk kun*¹⁷⁵ of the funeral, Salima and Jasur took on the biggest financial burden:

My husband bought all things, fruits for the gathering. It was Dutch oranges, mandarins. He bought everything that is Dutch. He did not buy stuff that is produced in Tashkent because it will spoil quickly. We also bought meat, sheep. We took on the hardest things. They [*other relatives*] bought rice only. They have lots of children. When there will be a gathering for the one-year memorial, they will buy everything for the next time. My father-in-law told us to sell cattle when he dies. We had money from potatoes and cauliflower. My husband said that it is better to keep cattle.

The intermediate families benefited from selling Dutch crops to cover ritual expenses and achieve food security. However, many of them experienced challenges in selling Dutch cabbage which increased the vulnerability of the households. The border with Kazakhstan was closed, making it impossible to transfer crops by railroad to the neighbouring country. As a result, the local bazaars were full of crops and the price for cabbage went down. Many farmers kept cabbage in the field waiting for the opportunity to sell the crop. Salima and Jasur sold about 34 tons (17,000 heads) of cabbage in June wholesale to a buyer who sends it to Russia by railcar. She thought that if they did not find a client to buy their cabbage, they would leave the entire harvest in the field like other *dehqons*.

Between the months of March and October Salima's labour intensified extremely as she worked on six various pieces of lands: (1) the household plot of land planting cauliflower, (2) rented land where she cut cauliflowers for trade, (3) rented land with cabbage, (4) a new piece of land they leased from someone in *kishlok* with cauliflower crops, (5) land with beetroot, and (6) land with potatoes. During June 20-

¹⁷⁵ *Kirk kun* [Uz.] is forty days of a funeral.

21, Salima, her husband, and her *jian*¹⁷⁶ planted Dutch cauliflower seeds in two *pols*¹⁷⁷ in their *hovli*. She usually hired *mardikors*¹⁷⁸ from the village to plant seeds but because I was willing to help her, Salima decided not to employ anyone.¹⁷⁹ Jasur and Salima's *jian* prepared the land. They ploughed it, flattened it, and made two *pols*. Jasur used a wooden board to make holes in the ground for the seeds. He stood on the board and pressed it with his weight. It was Salima and her father-in-law who invented the wooden board for planting seeds. The board is a square size 50 x 50 cm long. It has semi-circles on the top of the board; each semi-circle is about 2.5 cm in radius. The newly innovated wooden board used as know-how in this family intensified the women's labour as it takes long hours to plant seeds piece by piece in contrast to traditional planting where men spray cauliflower seeds by hand.

Salima and I threw Dutch seeds piece by piece into the small holes in the land. We worked planting these seeds from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on June 20th and from 6:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. on June 21st. We took breaks only to avoid extreme heat, 40-45 °C. In total, we planted 20,000 seeds into two *pols*. These seeds cost 400,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$223), 20 *so 'm* per seed. Salima planned to build a greenhouse because she wanted to plant seeds herself so that she can earn extra money by selling cauliflower sprouts. Later Salima weeded the crop early in the morning or late evenings.

While we were planting seeds, Salima and Jasur's daughter Feruza were cleaning the rooms, sweeping the yard, and cooking the meals. Due to the high workload, Salima delegated household responsibilities to her daughter, except for

¹⁷⁶ *Jian* [Uz.] is a nephew.

¹⁷⁷ *Pols* [Uz.] are rows of rectangular shape. They can be wide as one meter and long depending on types of crops and availability of land.

¹⁷⁸ *Mardikor* [Uz.] is a casual daily worker.

¹⁷⁹ At the beginning of the summer the waged daily labour of a female *mardikor* was 7-8,000 (U.S. \$4-5) *so 'm* and male – 9-10,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$5-6) per day. In June the paid waged labour of a female *mardikor* increased up to 9,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$5) and male – 14,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$8).

washing clothes and occasionally making meals. In addition, Salima's mother-in-law came occasionally, cleaned the house, and cooked meals twice a day. Their son Akram earned money by helping to plough land with a horse in the household plots of land. For that work he received a little bit of meat that he brought home.

While Salima safeguards the field daily and sometimes cuts the cauliflower for trade, she also harvests another plot of land with 4,000 grown cauliflower plants on land they leased. They leased this land for 1,000,300 *so 'm* (U.S. \$726). The estimated income gained from the trade of this crop is 4.8 million *so 'm* if each cauliflower is sold at 1,200 *so 'm* (U.S. \$0.67). The net profit is 3.5 million *so 'm* (U.S. \$1,955). Salima usually cuts 100 to 150 heads for her husband to sell. He gains 20,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$11) per day from trade, and also bought groceries for home.

Meanwhile the time to plant potatoes was coming. The farmer ploughs the land with a tractor that they lease to *dehqons* on the plan basis. Salima's household bought one ton of Dutch potato seeds from the local company for two million *so 'm*. Salima calculated that with the *mardikor's* labour, food for *mardikors* who were digging the land, the cost of each kilogram of potatoes had doubled, from 2,000 to 4,000 *so 'm*. They planted these potatoes to have seeds for the next year because the second-year harvest gives more yield than the first harvest.

To harvest cabbage and plant potatoes, Salima resorts to her kin members for labour in addition to *mardikors*; her nephews come for *hashar*.¹⁸⁰ She clearly differentiates Dutch from local potatoes; the latter she pays in kind after the harvest to her kin members for help. As her children are small, Salima cannot reciprocate her help in agricultural work. Although she is enmeshed in social networks with kin members, she is highly strained especially in summer.

¹⁸⁰ *Hashar* [Uz.] is an indigenous method of providing labour to each other in building houses, cleaning streets, or doing other projects.

As both adults focus on agricultural production and trade, these crops are of great strategic importance for this and other households and provide them with cash income. To circulate money better, they cooperate with a sponsor who invested some money into the agricultural production. The sponsor is paid back in cauliflower as he specialized in selling this crop only. The sponsor has many clients who bring crops to him in boxes. After a portion of the crop was sold, Salima and Jasur invited the sponsor for a nice meal: meat cooked with onions in oil, salads, and alcohol enough to feed a guest and household members but not Salima. Salima had tea with bread. At the meal Jasur and the sponsor calculated that 600,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$335) is Salima's and Jasur's share. Salima thought that the amount was too small and in the late evening she recalculated the expenses, profit, and share of the sponsor. She found out that the sponsor's calculations were wrong and she asked her husband to solve this problem.

Salima was fully in charge in the maintenance of all livelihood activities and processes that required looking for information related to the land, costs of crops, budgeting, leaving a niche for her husband to make arrangements on the land with a brigadier, and for the trade of crops with male counterparts. They jointly made decisions regarding the selection of crops, but all of the decisions about cultivation, harvesting, the employment of *mardikors*, and the mobilization of kin members for *hashshar* rested on Salima. The cooperation and teamwork of the couple was mostly weak and Salima was the key person in making decisions and carrying them out. Salima participated in *gap* networks for three years but had to withdraw because of a conflict among network members (See participation of Salima in *gap* network in Chapter 6).

For the most part, women’s resilience in households with preserving strategies was built on experimentation, the innovation of knowledge, and income-generating practices. Women innovated and experimented in planting tomatoes and cucumbers using scientific and traditional knowledge. Women’s participation in several *gap* or other informal networks strengthened their social safety nets. Women’s resilience demonstrates their choices, decision-making, and ability to negotiate with households and markets in this complex socio-economic situation in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Women and their household members improved their well-being and were able to gain symbolic power by acquiring a high income, accumulating resources, and securing employment.

Figure 8. Characteristics of the Households with the Preserving Response Set

Characteristics of the households with the preserving response set	
1.	Diversification of livelihood activities: agriculture, paid employment, waged employment, artisan work
2.	Utilize household plot of land intensively
3.	Lease the land on rent or plan basis from private farms
4.	Small number of livestock
5.	Dutch seeds purchase and growth of the horticultural produce
6.	Extensive knowledge of agriculture and other activities
7.	Experimentation, innovation
8.	Borrowing money to intensify livelihood activities
9.	Negotiation, bargaining among household members
10.	Engagement in <i>gap</i> and other networks

Accumulation Response

The diversification strategies of intermediate households differ from that of poorer households. In Ok Yul, the respondents with an accumulation strategy consisting of 1 percent were apt to diversify in the form of non-farm entrepreneurial activities while the poor were inclined to diversify in the form of casual waged labour. Diversification by the poor was highly reliant on agriculture while that by the better off families decreased such dependence. The key focus of wealthy households’

diversification was on non-agricultural production in the form of medium- and large-sized businesses: grocery stores, furniture-making workshops, *choikhonas*,¹⁸¹ cookie-bakeries, cotton-processing workshops,¹⁸² brick-making workshops, slag concrete bricks workshops, ceramic-making workshop, and construction. These households' access and control of various types of capital, such as human capital (possessing knowledge, skills); natural capital (land, water, etc.); and physical capital, including basic infrastructure (transport, communication), produced goods (tools and equipment), financial (income), and social (social networks). These private businesses negotiate with markets and effectively engage in the exchange between production and markets by meeting the demands of local communities. This category of households has a robust livelihood system (Ellis, 1998), displaying high resilience in terms of transforming assets into income and comparatively low sensitivity to stresses and socio-economic changes (inflation).

A livelihood consists of income (cash and in-kind) as well social institutions (kin, family, community), gender relations, and property rights (Hart, 1995). These entrepreneurial institutions run by men and women, created lower paying jobs in manual-labour intensive areas of the private sector. The cookie factory that I visited in the village employs women to package and men to use equipment to make dough; the cookie recipe is kept secret due to competition. The concentration of women in low manual-labour positions shows gender inequality and the location of women out of the centre of knowledge production as their work does not require much knowledge and skills. Hence, employment is subject to social norms and gender discrimination that disadvantage women.

¹⁸¹ *Choikhona* [Uz.] is a tea house for men.

¹⁸² The old cotton from *kurpa* (traditional mattress) and *ko'rpacha* is brought to the workshop to process and reuse it.

Women represent a flexible labour force in the highly competitive private sector of the economy as they will work long hours for little pay and minimal social benefits. The marginalization of women in the workforce in the private and other sectors is built on gender stereotypes; men receive higher payment as they, not the women, are thought to be the main breadwinners in their families. Women are considered to perform the role of helpers to men to generate income especially in family businesses. There is a “conjunction between place and the reproduction of cultural practices that are inputs and outputs of livelihood strategies” (Bebbington, 1999, p. 2034). I draw attention to the notions of equality, human rights, and ownership to explore how income-generating activities in Ok Yul can transform power relations and gender-based inequalities.

Access to resources is a form of social capital or asset that has a key function in building relations and financial transactions between and among household members and with those outside the household. These relations are mediated by the rules of the state, the market, and society. Relations with social networks are vital in the “determination of livelihood strategies, for such relationship become almost *sine qua non* mechanisms through which resources are distributed and claimed, and through which the broader social, political, and market logics governing the control, use, and transformation of resources are either reproduced or changed” (Bebbington, 1999, p. 2023). In Ok Yul, the owners of private enterprises have large social networks that allow them to transform their assets into commodities that can be perpetuated by conflict or cooperation in accessing and controlling the inputs and outputs of livelihoods among the family members.

Case 6. Furniture Workshop: Gendered Private Entrepreneurship

Women's empowerment is influenced by the ways access to resources is negotiated in a specific context. Access to resources expands women's opportunities, which may be utilized differently even within the same context (Kabeer, 1999). The case below illustrates different degrees of interdependency among male and female family members. The lucrative furniture business, usually dominated by men, requires a different reconfiguration of the social organization of work within the family that is also linked to the symbolic power man holds. The position of *domkom*¹⁸³ set up by the post-Soviet state in the local community relates to high authority and power in the community. Yet, symbolic power can be appropriated by women to exercise joint control of entrepreneurship to interact with the private economy, market, state, and community.

Matluba opa and her husband Erkin aka have been running a furniture factory for 20 years. They both are graduates of the Polytechnic University. They resold furniture to international students and produced capital at the right time to take advantage of future opportunities. The closure of five furniture factories in the city created opportunities for them to set up their own business. A few years ago, Erkin aka became *domkom* and responsible for the management of the community life. He is also an official director of the workshop, which is registered in his name but is managed by his wife. She accepts orders, and delivers equipment with her two sons who set up furniture in clients' houses.

They purchased equipment that makes various patterns on the wood, allowing them to meet the interests of customers. They also diversified the family business by repairing old furniture. They sell their furniture to the villagers and people from

¹⁸³ *Domkom* [Russ.] is the chief of the community who is responsible for the management of community affairs. This word was introduced in Soviet times to set up the management of the organizational structure of the community. It was appropriated by villagers and is still used.

different parts of Uzbekistan. They plan to expand their business to Kazakhstan through friends and to build business ties with friends in Turkey.

The key to the expansion of the business was its establishment at a lumber yard that was closed in the village in post-Soviet times. Matluba opa and Erkin aka had capital to invest and took advantage of perhaps low prices for the lumber yard and its equipment. The couple wants to set up textile production to make curtains in the building where the furniture is currently made. The new business is registered in Matluba's name because Erkin aka could not do both roles of a *domkom* and an entrepreneurial manager; Matluba opa will exercise full management and control of the business. The furniture workshop business is complemented by an on-farm business, selling the milk of 30 goats.

Socialist and post-socialist societies are often considered to be operating in state and shadow economies, or formal and informal sectors. However, such dual-economy models do not always take into consideration the complex character of economic activity as it is often hard to distinguish the two sectors. People develop livelihood activities and interact with the state using moral judgements which are the outcome of state power and moral categories (Rasanayagam, 2003). This case shows how moral judgements about the male legitimate power of the *domkom* interplaying with symbolic power can also restrain him from pursuing entrepreneurial activity. This situation enables his wife to seize and legally own the business. Matluba opa diversified her livelihood activities into on-farm and non-agricultural jobs; she invested money into her new business from the income gained. As a successful entrepreneur, she plans to expand her business by setting up a curtain-making workshop.

Empowerment is a complex notion where the designated and symbolic power of men can help women and the entire household to accumulate resources and invest into non-agricultural activities. Households with accumulation strategies focused on male-dominated entrepreneurial activities with advanced technologies and innovation. Their activities were built on extensive knowledge of local and international markets and strong participation in social networks.

Figure 9. Characteristics of the Households with the Accumulation Response Set

Determinants of the households with the preserving response set	
1.	Diversification of livelihood activities into non-agricultural activities
2.	Possess symbolic power
3.	Rarely joint management of husband and wife of income generating activities
4.	Expansion of business
5.	Local and international trade
6.	Extensive knowledge of livelihood activities and markets (local and international)
7.	Experimentation, innovation
8.	Engagement in <i>gap</i> and other social networks
9.	Higher education

Islam, Livelihoods, and Gender

The livelihood resilience approach recognizes the capacity of local systems to self-organize (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2003). In Central Asia, these systems are built on Islamic ways of life and self-governance. The five pillars of Islam govern beliefs and actions giving meaning and purpose of life to local people: (1) *Iman* (Ar., Faith) expressed in the declaration of faith or Shahada, *La illaha illa'Llah wa Muhammad rasullullah* (Ar., there is no other God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet); (2) *salat* (prayer five times daily); (3) *sawm* (fasting in the month of Ramadan), (4) *zakat* (giving of alms), and (5) *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca if conditions permit) (Funk & Said, 2009; Nasr, 2004). Women in the study stressed the importance of performing only three principles such as *iman*, *salat*, and *sawm* for women who are in financial need or single women; the latter are not required to pay

zakat. These principles stress the connection between the person and Allah in addition to the principles of economic justice and the redistribution of wealth through *zakat*, the donation to sanctify the ownership of wealth and spend generously on charities.

The Islamic economic system is aimed at achieving three goals: (1) to meet the basic needs of all members, including children, the disabled, the elderly, and the poor; (2) to guarantee economic development to satisfy the needs of the increasing population; and (3) to balance inequalities of income. The state, as the representative of society, should supervise natural resources for the collective good of the society (Zaman, 1996).¹⁸⁴ The livelihood activities of rural women in Ok Yul relate not only to the major Islamic economic principles, but also to their resilience against the historical aspect of the Soviet state endeavours to emancipate and modernize women by changing social roles of people. In the Soviet period, both men and women were mobilized to work in public spheres and collective and state farms to meet the economic goals that did not enhance the economic development in Uzbekistan. The local notions of economic development that disadvantaged communities and decreased the status of women by changing the social organization of space and life were imperial. Imperialism, according to Mills (2005), is based on the appropriation and exploitative trade grounded in the imbalance of power. This imperial space had a gendered nature, as Moore specifies, “space considered as text does not take as its object real social and economic conditions, but rather certain ideological representations of the real” (Moore, 1986, p. 152).

¹⁸⁴ Zaman’s model of the Islamic economic system seems ideal to me. I think Uzbekistan’s economic policy is geared towards point one and two. I suggest that people strive to meet the three points of the Islamic economic notion of development through practicing five tenants of Islam.

In the instance of women's livelihood activities in Uzbekistan, religious women¹⁸⁵ stressed the importance of income-generating activities within the household space such as craft-making, tailoring, and baking that are encouraged by Islam. Women aspired to pursue trade or entrepreneurial activities, as these are supported by Islam. In conversations, women justified their entrepreneurial activities by using the example of *Khadijah ona*, the wife of the prophet of Muhammad, who was a merchant and combined successfully her economic activity and pious life. By transforming local space for income-generating activities in the household space that is part of the informal economy, women carve their niches and organize spaces which challenge the social practices of gender subordination that are quite apparent in the public and private sectors of the economy. Consequently, the household location is women's private space that empowers them to determine social and spatial relations and challenge dominant social values. Moore (1986) argues that besides prevailing models of symbolic space, there are alternative forms of spatiality where the meaning encoded in the organization of space and its relation to social structure form a two-way process.

Moore's analysis is significant for understanding the socio-cultural processes of the transformations taking place in a specific space, yet does not clearly indicate the role of agency or meaning-making ascribed in the organization of space. I argue that it is crucial to explore and understand religious meanings that relate to income-generating activities and religious observance inscribed in space. This specific mode

¹⁸⁵ Being a religious woman in Ok Yul means that a woman is an *otin* who delivers classes about Islam to women. Women who practiced Islam by praying were not regarded by people in the *kishlak* as religious. They were perceived as practicing Islam. I suggest that the term "religious" associates strictly with the idea of the government about Islamic fundamentalism. *Otins* are fearful to teach classes and veil (put on a headscarf) in public. Some women did not pray and did not follow the tenets of Islam and *otins* called them to study Islam. This group of women was called irreligious. Some women did not pray but followed other tenets of Islam and they were considered as practicing religion. I consider "religious" in a broad sense encompassing women who teach Islam and also those who follow Islamic philosophy.

of religious meaning and socio-economic interaction influence the social interaction among women within the community and the maintenance of everyday life activities through their critical consciousness that enables them to analyze and reflect on moral values and livelihood choices.

Renegotiation of Gender and Islam: Identity, Status, and Income

Women in the research site accentuate the role of their husbands as primary breadwinners. Even in cases of unemployment or difficulties imposed by their economic situation, men can engage in the informal job sector to support their families. The participants of the study acknowledge the role of their husbands as the heads of families. They rationalized risk aversion strategies by delegating men to deal with the most difficult tasks such as land purchase. Some women also rejected gender ideology theories by embracing and valuing domestic work and children's upbringing and not accepting the legitimacy of their subordinate status. They valued their work and considered it equal to, or even more important than, men's work as these women raised a healthy generation. These women rejected the idea that money is a key indicator to define equality. They also asserted that a woman is protected at home because she is not exposed to sun or the hazardous conditions of men's work. Women also said that they should earn enough to cover only food expenses, and it is men's duty to earn income and support the family, be a provider and protector. In fact, women stated that if women are not able to cope with domestic work, the labour should be hired to help to carry out the household duties.

In my conversations with the participants of the study in Ok Yul, women (students of *otins*) characterize gender roles and responsibilities by saying, “*Er*

podishoh, ayol vazir.”¹⁸⁶ They explained their overt “*podpolnii*”¹⁸⁷ management of household affairs by saying, “The king sits on his throne always, and he never goes outside the house. A woman goes outside, talks to people, and gives advice. A king cannot live without the advisor’s advice and he cannot make any decision. All decisions are given by an advisor.” One older woman explained that the king may not listen the first, second, or third time. But by the end, the king does what an advisor tells him. I said that there is a saying in Russian, “Man is a head, and a woman is a neck,” which implies that where the neck turns is where the head turns. Women easily agreed with the analogy. Similar to Agarwal (1994b), I suggest that we cannot infer from overt behaviour whether women recognize the ideological justifications or male dominance and privilege and the unequal distribution of resources and household duties, or if they accept the conditions as unfair but feel pushed to adhere to compliant behaviour as a coping strategy, or perhaps their insights are mixture of both.

Based on my personal talks and active participant observation, I propose that women in the village recognized gender inequity in terms of property distribution, the existence of domestic violence, and the poor income-generating capacity of men across class lines. It was poor and middle-class divorced or separated women who returned home after conflicts in their husband’s house and claimed property rights to own a house and land. Rich or upper-middle class women believed that their daughters do not need to claim land in their parent’s house because they maintain their living standards well in their in-laws’ house. Lower- or middle-class women in more intensely difficult situations may feel they have less to risk and more to gain in taking direct action to transform gender inequalities. I suggest that rich women opt to leverage their wealthy status to have power over other women, but don’t challenge the

¹⁸⁶ “*Er podishoh, ayol vazir*” [Uz.] is “a man is king, and a woman is an advisor to the king.”

¹⁸⁷ *Podpolnii* [Russ.] is underground, secret.

patriarchy. In contrast, women who are painfully trapped in both patriarchy and poverty are more willing to risk the unpredictable and potentially dangerous outcomes of challenging men in order to possibly attain more security, comfort, wealth, and control over their lives.

In this study it was evident that men's inability to fulfill the breadwinner's role led to relinquishing their gendered responsibility. Men indicated socio-economic challenges imposed on them that make the definition of gender ideology complex. However, women reported that some men began rejecting the constricted definition of masculinity that limits their role to economic support. Women wanted to assert the men's role of a provider and renegotiate economic responsibilities in a balanced way through symbolic representations in language:

Man is like the sky, and a woman is like the land. Whatever falls from the sky, that is what is grown on the land. Man is responsible for bringing food, raising children, and they spend time outside the household. They are our protectors.

Women are linked to nature because of their reproductive abilities related to childrearing and nurturing, providing food, and taking care of the families (Shiva, 1989). Women's responsibilities relate to production, reproduction and the multiplication of resources. Both men and women have symbolic associations expressed in language that empowers women in the transition period to make claims on men, and to demand economic support especially when men gave up their breadwinner roles or earn very little.¹⁸⁸

In my conversation with Hakima opa, a religious woman in her 40s working as a journalist, I stressed that job opportunities are limited and it is hard to find jobs and feed the family. She drew on her cultural beliefs to argue that it is men's obligation to

¹⁸⁸ Women's moral claim in Ok Yul pushes men to take any income-generating opportunities, even low-paid job. They want men to use their income for their family rather than waste it on cigarettes or drinks.

feed families especially in times of distress and earn *halol*¹⁸⁹ money. Through language and symbolism women in the village reinforce the idea of masculinity to guarantee the human security of their families. This may be seen as gender-based pressure when men renegotiate their roles. Hakima opa gave an example from her own life:

There was a time when salary was not given. At that time I did not work. Marip aka went to help to Feruza opoki.¹⁹⁰ He dug a hole and for his work he was paid in flour. He brought in a pot three kilograms of flour. I needed this flour. I said to myself I wish I had flour to make a meal. Allah saw that I needed flour. The Allah knows what to give. If you have a child, you bring him up. Only with *halol* money you can find something.

A number of women in Ok Yul stressed their role in preserving and multiplying what their husbands brought to them by symbolically associating themselves with land that enables peace, growth, and well-being. In general, I did not hear much criticism in regard to men's breadwinner role. This can be explained by the village's geographical location close to the capital which means that this village is better off than others, and that men can usually find some form of income. The exceptions were the conversations related to *ichki kuyovs* and their inability to support the family.

While religious women in Ok Yul stressed the duties of men in regard to fulfilling their responsibilities based on Islam, women in the Khorezm region were harsh in their criticism of men who were not fulfilling their economic function. Khorezm women never made a reference to Islam when they spoke about men's roles and responsibilities.

Khorezm is characterized by a high outflow of migration to Russia and Kazakhstan for agriculture and trade (both women and men) and construction jobs

¹⁸⁹ *Halol* [Uz.] is honestly earned money.

¹⁹⁰ *Opoki* [Uz.] is an uncle's wife.

(men). Migrant or other women who brought higher income to the family than men in their households questioned gender roles and expectations. Some women stated firmly at the beginning of our conversation that “women feed men.” Some men expressed concern about the radical shift of gender roles and characteristics impacted by the inability of men to bring income, “men becoming women, and women becoming men.” With women’s labour migration and income, power relations are reversed; authority, rights, and responsibilities are claimed differently within the household. This led to changes in access to resources, their allocation, and decision-making power in the family, but not the renegotiation of the household responsibilities (Tursunova, 2008c). Therefore, the strong contestation of gender perceptions, roles, and identities is apparent in the remote village with disadvantaged access to natural, physical, financial, and human resources.

Understanding Income, Expenditures, and Poverty

Religious women in the study stressed that people lost *sabr*, the conception linked to economical expenditures in the household that repudiate the global phenomena of consumerism spread through soap operas and western films. These women emphasize human agency in terms of personal responsibility, focusing on virtues such as modesty and humility that can be considered inadequate to a modernity that regards these qualities as passive, naïve, and submissive.

Dilfuza opa, a 41-year-old woman, moved to a new house five years ago after living with an extended household. Her husband Anvar aka works as an electrician in a hospital and diversifies his income by working privately as a labourer. The couple has three children, aged fourteen, ten, and six. Dilfuza is employed part-time as a teacher of religion at the university but mostly does tailoring working at home. She learnt sewing skills from her mother who became an *otin*. Dilfuza opa who practices

Islam critiques the extreme expenditures of weddings. As a tailor, she sewed a 30-meter-long curtain for the *aivan*.¹⁹¹ The customer paid three million *so 'm* (U.S. \$1,676) for the material, and 70,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$39) for Dilfuza to sew the curtain.

Dilfuza is also critical of the expenses that women undertake when they attend weddings. They buy a new dress for each wedding that may cost up to 100,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$56). In the exercise of *sabr*, she prefers to spend money for food and children rather than outfits. She argues that “when people complain and say times are bad, they are saying that Allah is bad. People should not say so.” She questions their budgeting skills:

People complained that the bread price increased or the price of oil. But they go and buy new dresses even if prices increase with no complaint. The price for one bottle of oil increased to 12,000 *so 'm*. Everyone complains. No one thinks that this bottle is enough for several months.

Dilfuza opa also questions the understanding of poverty. She says that the poor in the village eat the same food and wear clothes, better than mine, even though they do not have a surrounding wall near the household plot of land. In her own action *sabr* is a way of life and the path to God where socio-economic challenges should be dealt with in a moral way. Also, she believes that it is a time of tests, when gender roles can change rapidly and women will take over traditional male activity such as selling meat:

They (people) lost *sabr*. Look at people. They have everything. It is said that times will come when 40 surprises will appear. First, women do business, and men will help them. And second, when women sell meat. These things are happening nowadays. This time is a test for us, either we move on or go backwards.

Religious women state that materialistic things do not interest them. Feruza opa, who became religious after the death of her father, said that wealth no longer interests her. She gives an example of one *hadith* about richness. “Allah does not

¹⁹¹ *Aivan* [Uz.] is a porch, or veranda.

acknowledge richness. We have three things when we go to that world: children, richness, and action. Two things will leave us, children and richness. What is left with us is action. In our world, we should act.”

Proper Moral Life Style

Women build their socio-economic life on notions of *sabr*, hard work that will be transmitted through *baraka*; the sacredness of *baraka* relates to the possession of the “ineffable, supernatural substance – grace, blessings, superabundance, purity, etc.” The supernatural substance is God-given to those Muslims “who in life and death were endowed with uncommon piety (*taqwa*) and *ihsan* (excellence)” (Clancy-Smith, 1994, p. 33). People should be *mu'min*¹⁹² and also *muhsin*.¹⁹³ *Baraka* can only be received if people surrender to Allah and possess moral virtues that create sacredness and social moral order in life.

For example, a woman told me that her neighbour curses the radishes she grows. Cursing food denies an opportunity to receive divine *baraka*.¹⁹⁴ She also condemns some people’s practice turning back the gas and electricity meter to reduce the utility bill. She does not consider this behaviour to be an act of nonviolent resistance to the state, but rather immoral behaviour. She blames people for cheating the state, which then increased the price of gas and electricity taking into account illegal usage of services.

Case 7. Livelihoods, Islam and Empowerment

Dilfuza opa herself gives Qur’anic classes to the local women for free. Her main dedication is to educate women about Islam and a proper life style. She wears

¹⁹² *Mu'min* [Ar.] means a person surrendering to faith.

¹⁹³ *Muhsin* [Ar.] is the possessor of virtues.

¹⁹⁴ One of the teachings is that food is sacred. People should not curse food.

Islamic clothes¹⁹⁵ and has a lifestyle centred on her family, kin, and community. She is highly respected in the community, and local women consult her confidentially on family conflicts or life matters.

Dilfuza opa fully runs the financial budgeting of the family. For example, she calculated that if a family has a cow which gives ten litres of milk every day, that is enough to cover food expenses for a family like hers, with three children. Their cow gives four litres a day, and when they sell milk, they receive 6,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$3) every two days. They spend 2,000 *so'm* for bread per day.

She believes that nowadays opportunities are vast, and people can start entrepreneurial activities that were prohibited before. She thinks that people should not interfere in state affairs or go on protests; rather they should focus on family and household life. She stressed that people can rent land, plant vegetables, and generate income. She gives the example of the diversification and resilience strategies of her extended household she lived with: “We have cattle, we do *dehqonchilik*, we have *choihkona*, and the five sons (out of seven) work in the public sector as well. We rented one hectare of land for one million *so'm* and planted cabbage. We made three to four million from the sale of cabbage in the spring. In the fall we planted potatoes and profited five to six million *so'm*. People should work hard.”

In her narrative Dilfuza opa indicates that socio-economic opportunities can be pursued through *sabr*, a proper life style, that will be blessed through *baraka*. The teller stresses human virtues, but also hard work, people's taking responsibility for poverty upon themselves, and questioning budget arrangements and priorities women make. Local language, knowledge and power and women's income-generating

¹⁹⁵ She wears long-sleeved colourful dresses with *ishton* (pants). She puts on a folded large square *ro'mol* (kerchief) into a triangle and wraps it behind her ears. Other religious women in the *kishlak* wrapped it in front.

activities can be blessed through *baraka* and empower women to transformative aspects and processes of well-being.

Halol and Harom

Besides the five pillars of Islam, there are other recommended acts of rectitude that convey the reward from God (*savob*). They consist of acts of voluntary charity, building a mosque or school, doing extra prayers, and following the example of the Prophet in individual matters advised but not required by the *Shari'ah*. *Harom*¹⁹⁶ comprises of all forbidden acts, the commission of which is punishable. This includes all the “Thou shalt not” rulings in the Ten Commandments such as murder, adultery, and theft, as well as gambling, consumption of alcohol, eating pork, drinking blood, and looking at the private part of bodies (except that of your spouse). *Halol* behaviour is behaviour that represents clean and honest living. *Halol* relates to eating *halol* meat from appropriate living animals that are butchered in the Islamic way.

In conversations with me, women emphasized proper lifestyle as a mechanism of individual accountability before Allah and his laws, and the social empowerment of local communities. I identify social empowerment as a mechanism of regulations and transformations based on the notions of duties, responsibilities, and accountability to the person, family, and community. Through critical thinking and the consciousness-raising of community members, women shape and determine the socio-economic discourse of a proper life. A young woman, Minovar opa, a journalist with higher education, frames this socio-economic discourse as “*programma*.”¹⁹⁷

This is *programma*. This is a program of life [*She said the whole sentence in Russian*]. This is a program of the life of a person [*in Russian again*]. The person is born. Everything is written from birth till death, from A till the end. It is even written what is allowable to eat. *Halol* and *harom*. Why *harom*?

¹⁹⁶ *Harom* [Ar.] is forbidden acts.

¹⁹⁷ *Programma* [Russ.] is a programme.

Because it makes people's organs sick. The cold, the hot should be observed.¹⁹⁸ You should not do bad things. You should work *halol*.

As Nasr (2004) indicates, the notions of “duty” and “right,” obligation and claim, and law as well as justice are related to the term *haqq*. The Arabic term *haqq* can refer to God, the *Qur'an* (called also *al-haqq*), law, the responsibilities before God and His Law, as well as rights and claims. Exercising *haqq* for women means making proper choices pertaining to their social and livelihood activities. In the socio-economic context, women who were left by their husbands started or renewed the practice of praying and fasting that allowed them to heal the trauma. They also led a *halol* life with duties and responsibilities, the life that enabled them to cope with vulnerability and avert risks through claims of support from kin members. One respondent spoke about the life of Karima opa whose husband accidentally passed away:

She finished university after the death of her husband. It was difficult for her. She was left with four children. She does *namaz*. She has knowledge. Her four children also do *namaz*. They [*her relatives*] did not let her work in the school. She cans for neighbours, she bakes, and she cooks. Her children work. Her children dress better than mine. She dresses better than me. She has meat in the *qozon* boiling. She is learning, studying religion. She stays home. Some women started living wrongly with their daughters. But she stayed home. Money comes from here and there. Her brother takes care of her. Allah gives him a lot. If he did not support her and closed his doors, he will die one day or become an invalid.

Women also emphasized that what men earned is Allah-given because Allah granted their abilities to carry out livelihood activities. Even though I acknowledged men's income, because I was educated in the atheist Soviet system, women denied my opinion. I suggest that using a notion of Allah gives values and meanings rooted in divine “projects” that reject the agency of men and economic power over women and

¹⁹⁸ Among Chinese, Japanese, and Indians in Asia, the binary system constitutes the foundation of worldview. The ideas about hot and cold foods have long permeated Central Asia. They existed along with Islam (Gorsunova, 2001).

household members, and perhaps creates a space for reinforcing gender performative tasks.

Conclusion

The new post-Independence economic changes posed new opportunities but also limitations. Declining resources, such as the lesser availability of farm land and increasing prices to rent farmers' land reduced opportunities for peasants to generate income from agricultural trade. Moreover, climate change reduced yields and affected farming and local food security.

People in Uzbekistan were concerned about the reduction of local biodiversity and its negative effects on their livelihoods. New foreign seeds, affordable for a few rich peasants, intensified the class structure and a gap between rich and poor peasants. These new foreign seeds empowered economically the highest strata of peasants. However, these peasants could not reproduce the seeds and were dependent on foreign distributors' supply of seeds. This relationship between local peasants and foreign markets created a new neo-colonial dependency.

The new land tenure changes had a specific effect on women's lives and their household members. Families with coping strategies had difficulties diversifying livelihood activities into agricultural, informal, and formal economic sectors in order to survive. They usually experienced problems getting employment and had to sell off their assets to cope with economic challenges. These families used their household plot of land to meet food security. Their inability to buy resources needed to carry out income-generating activities was another factor which posed limitations. In spite of the multiplicity of the above-mentioned factors, people with coping strategies made choices rationally and developed their set of responses to overcome distress.

Households with coping strategies reduced their participation in social networks (life cycle rituals and *gap*) and, consequently, were losing social capital. They also had to postpone holding life cycle events and/or borrow money for delivering a celebration. Income from livelihoods affected women's involvement in *gap*. Women who participated in *gap* networks could not draw in money and had to withdraw from these networks. These *gap* networks tended to last for a short period time (See chapter 6).

It was also evident that the household composition was a factor influencing the sustainability of the households' members' lives. Pensioners, widowed women, and women with *ichki kuyovs* who did not have a stable income were vulnerable. These families had poor livelihood resilience capabilities and experienced food insecurity, poor health, and labour shortage. However, these marginalized women challenged patriarchal norms and gender-based oppression. Their agency was expressed in their ability to generate income and challenge men's property rights such as land ownership. Women could not rely on Islamic discourse, according to which brothers are supposed to take care of their sisters.

Women with preserving strategies had a much more diverse range of activities than women with coping set of responses; their activities included artisan work, intensive agricultural activities on farmers' land, and waged and paid employment. The driver of their resilience was experimentation, innovation, and income-generating practices. Their accessibility to resources and participation in several *gap*, *chernaya kassa*, and other informal networks strengthened their social safety nets. Women's preserving resilience demonstrates their choices, decision-making, and ability to negotiate with households and markets in this complex socio-economic situation. Women and their household members improved their well-being and were able to

gain symbolic power by having high income, accumulating resources, and having employment.

Power relations were embedded between rich families and those who did not have many resources in the extended household across gender lines. Rich families perpetuated disadvantaged access to land for divorced or single women in the extended households. Within individual family dynamics, power relations interplayed (except women who lived with *ichki kuyovs*) in terms of men's ownership of house and land.

The management of entrepreneurial activities such as furniture-making, brick-making, and bakeries was considered a masculine pursuit. The number of women who run big entrepreneurial activities is small, and they tend to have higher education and a record of business activities in the past. Their entitlement to resources and their economic empowerment was achieved through the symbolic power of their husbands who were the chiefs of the community and had access to male networks of bureaucracy. In spite of different livelihood strategies, many women used their social networks, knowledge of seeds, markets, and symbolic and economic powers to strengthen their livelihood resources to maximize profit and improve their well-being.

The notions of "*harakat, harakat, harakat, harakatda baraka*" were pursued by all women. However, the way women exercised their agency varied, and sacredness was achieved through different paths. Young women pursued income maximization by sewing, growing tomatoes, herbs, potatoes, cucumbers, strawberries and selling them in markets. *Otins* and their followers indicated the importance of *sabr* and hard work that is transmitted through *baraka* and, hence, sacredness to people who live with moral principles. These women stressed proper moral life which is grounded in notions of *haqq*, duties and rights, and *halol* and *harom* that influence

people's decisions to make correct choices in regard to livelihood activities. Furthermore, religious women defined spiritual poverty as a lack of human development rather than with an income-based definition. They associated poverty with poor budgeting skills and consumerism.

I suggest that women's *harakat* is strategic action grounded in Islamic epistemologies. This process is *ijtihad*,¹⁹⁹ a reflective response to socio-economic changes interpreted through various actions to achieve sacredness. All women stress different notions of agency that form their discursive knowledge, and their inner voice and authority that helps them to move households from poverty to multidimensional livelihoods: spiritual, economic, social, cultural, human, financial, natural, and psychological.

In contrast to mainstream women, religious women's livelihood resilience and agency was linked to Islamic economic principles and ways of being and doing inscribed in language, space, and actions. In the context of economic transformations and changes in gender ideologies and responsibilities when women became the main breadwinners, these religious women exercise gendered pressure to ensure that men perform their breadwinners' role instead of giving it up.

The alarming tendency of economic development is informalisation of labour in self-employed activities and trade. Both women and men do not receive social benefits and do not have a record in the employment book as they did in Soviet times. New post-Soviet Independence realities urged people to strategize their livelihood activities more into informal sectors of economy. It is more likely within the "regional patriarchies" that single, divorced, and widowed women will continue to be marginalized.

¹⁹⁹ In Islamic thought *ijtihad* [Ar.] means to apply reasoning to the interpretation of sources. *Ijtihad* is about knowledge production, reflexivity, and action which constitute resilient thinking and action.

The gendered nature of women's involvement in the informal economy demonstrates the underprivileged position of women. Women had to choose less well-paid jobs, work long hours, and perform child-rearing and household duties. Lack of economic opportunities and the shortage of social benefits such as family allowances and child benefits have a disempowering effect on women's status in the family and society. These conditions will likely disadvantage young women who live in extended household with poor economic power.

Women who migrated for work to the Tashkent region had no alternatives but to work as casual labourers. The broken social contract between farmers and peasants in rural areas in Uzbekistan resulted in migration to other regions within the country. The gendered nature of agricultural work (women planted, transplanted plants, weeded, and harvested crops) and women's lower waged salaries than of men constrained women's human security, empowerment, and identity.

CHAPTER 6

GAP AS A SPACE OF AGENCY, POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

I was walking in a village and by chance I saw Omina opa with her two daughters (see Chapter 5) with a tray coming to her mother's house. She told me that her mother, Nargiza opa²⁰⁰ was holding her *gap* in the afternoon and I was welcome to join them. I entered the *hovli* where I saw Nargiza opa and her daughter-in-law who was busy cooking and baking in the kitchen. I started helping to prepare for the event and talked with Omina opa, her sister, and children. In the afternoon, elder women came and entered the room where there stood a rectangular table full of mixed goods, fruits, bakery, and salads.

Gaps – sometimes called *gashtak*, *tukma*, *ziyofat*, or *ziefat* – are locally organized rotating saving associations and recreational networks. They are local structures of power and authority in the socio-economic communal life in Uzbekistan.²⁰¹ *Gaps* are networks comprising of individuals of the same sex; approximately twelve or more women meet at least once a month at these social gatherings. Each *gap* is headed by a *jo'ra boshi*²⁰² who sets rules with members, solves conflicts, and takes care of accounting. These social groups operate as indigenous economic networks wherein all participants contribute fixed funds, given to the host of the event, which they will receive as a lump sum payment at a future

²⁰⁰ Nargiza opa is an *otin* in Ok Yul. See her participation in *gap* in this chapter.

²⁰¹ *Gap* [Uz.] is singular; *gaplar* is plural. Uzbeks and Tajiks use such terms as *gashtak*, *gap* and *soybat/suhbat*. The Tajik word *gashtak* means stroll about which relates to the rotating basis of the network. The Tajik word *gap* means a conversation to discuss economic, military, and political issues. The Persian word *soybat/suhbat* means conversation while in Arabic it means association, network, friendship (Snesarev, 1963).

²⁰² *Jo'ra boshi* [Uz.] is a leader.

event. Each member takes turns hosting the event at her home until the full rotation is complete. Then the next round of *gap* starts.²⁰³

At the time of the fieldwork, one kilogram of meat was worth six to eight thousand *so'm* (equivalent of \$4-6 U.S.), and was the index used in calculating the amount that each member would contribute.²⁰⁴ The contribution amount is influenced by the *gap*'s purpose and the status and wealth of its members. It is customary for the hostess and her household to provide food, consisting of soup with meat, *manti*,²⁰⁵ *narin*,²⁰⁶ *somsa*,²⁰⁷ *plov*,²⁰⁸ fruits, and refreshments. Recently, new forms of *gap* have emerged in Uzbekistan. Some women are now gathering in cafeterias and/or restaurants to socialize and discuss the kind of basic needs networking members can provide to each other. They order meals and share the bill together and give the lump sum of money to the person in rotation.

At the time when the fieldwork was conducted in Ok Yul, the contribution of money in men's *gap* networks was higher than in women's *gap* networks. In men's *gap* the contribution was from 30,000 up to 50,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$17-28) while in women's *gap* from 5,000 up to 30,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$3-17). This gendered dimension of financial contribution speaks to the unequal income generating abilities between men and women.

²⁰³ Traditional rotating savings and credit associations among women exist under different names in many part of the world. In Senegal: *tontines* (mutual aid/solidarity groups) and *dahiras* (religious-based associations (Creevey, 2002). In India: *chits* (Sethi, 1995). In Malasia: *kuts* (Ghazali, June, 2003). In Ethiopia: *iqqubs* (rotating credit associations) and *iddirs* (mutual aid associations) (Ayalew, 2003). In Ghana: *susu* (Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey, 1995). In Japan: *kou* (Miyana, 1995).

²⁰⁴ In Tashkent, the amount of contribution to *gap* is 50,000 - 100,000 *so'm* among the middle class. The wealthy contribute from U.S. \$50 - \$100 and higher. The index in the city is the U.S dollar. At the time of the fieldwork, the unofficial rate of the U.S. dollar to the local currency was 1,790 *so'm*. The official rate of the U.S. dollar in the National Bank of Uzbekistan was 1,490 *so'm*.

²⁰⁵ *Manti* is dumplings.

²⁰⁶ *Narin* is a noodle and meat dish.

²⁰⁷ *Somsa* is meat-filled pastries.

²⁰⁸ *Plov* [Uz.] is a meal from rice, carrots, and meat.

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how gendered space in the Tashkent *oblast* operates. Women reorganized their physical space for social networks and economic empowerment between 1991 and the present, the period during which Uzbekistan moved from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy. In particular, I will examine how women's *gaps* and *chernaya kassa* function as a mechanism for livelihood resilience and social and economic empowerment in the post-socialist economy in the village of Ok Yul.

In the first section, I will provide a historical overview of the *gap* and discuss how women's agency and symbolic power interplays between human agency and social structures. In the next section, I examine women's *gap* as a web of social networks and multidimensional empowerment: economic, social, organizational, cultural, psychological, human empowerment, healing, and distributive justice. In the third section, I give examples of different types of *gap* networks to demonstrate how young *kelins* (brides) negotiate space and exercise agency and power to reorganize social, cultural, and economic space through the social and economic networks in Tashkent *oblast*.

Chapter Thesis

In this chapter, I take social networks of women to be a locus of gendered and gendering landscapes where women reorganize their position to exercise their choice in order to create interdependent relations over which men have restricted control of influence, power, and authority. In this respect, I want to regard female social networks as strategic. Women may choose to participate in multiple networks by crossing the boundaries of life cycle, economic, social, religious, and proprietary rituals with the aim to sustain, increase, and accumulate human, natural, physical,

social, and financial resources. These social networks link to women's livelihood activities situated in the domain of household, community, and the market which assist in the distribution and exchange of the needed resources.

In the socio-cultural and economic context of the Tashkent *oblast*,²⁰⁹ women and household members exploit multiple agricultural and non-agricultural income-generating activities in the informal economy with no job security or benefits. Women choose to work in the informal sector due to rational economic reasons: they receive higher income in the informal rather than in the public sector and do not have to pay taxes. Depending on the individual's and household members' resilience thinking, people organize dynamic livelihoods to respond to disturbance and reorganize activities while undergoing changes in identity and social structures. Women focus on strategies to empower themselves to alleviate poverty and potential financial shocks, such as life cycle rituals, medical expenses, and tuition fees. On the other hand, women are limited in enacting their choices because of patriarchal and gender-biased property rules.

I argue that traditional socio-economic network structures function not just as anti-colonial solidarity groups against regimes, but also as empowering networks for social justice, the redistribution of resources, healing, meaning-making, voice, knowledge, agency, and conflict resolution. Gaps were also anti-colonial institutions when *Jadids*²¹⁰ appropriated them for new aims to carry out cultural, political, and socio-economic reforms against the Russian Tsarist invasion (Khalid, 1998).

Currently, these informal networks are the only source of accessing cash; women in

²⁰⁹ *Oblast* [Uz.] is a region.

²¹⁰ *Jadid* [Uz.] is a local movement of Muslim intelligentsia in Central Asia in the late 19th and beginning of 20th centuries to emancipate women, and modernize Islam by setting western educational standards in schools (Khalid, 1998).

rural areas do not have assets to take loans from banks and also do not want to deal with bureaucracy.

History: Social and Economic Aspects of *Gap*

In order to understand the gendered landscape, we need to explore the origin of the *gap* and the continuity and discontinuity of holding *gaps*. This practice is subject to Soviet and post-Soviet reforms and the curtailment of conspicuous consumption and the accumulation of goods by indigenous peoples *vis-a-vis* European nationalities. Historically, *gaps* have been primarily associations of different age groups of men who usually got together to socialize and entertain themselves in men's houses (Snesarev, 1963) such as *choikhona*,²¹¹ or *mekhmonhona*,²¹² in winter, a time free from agricultural work (Sattor, 2007).

The Russian ethnographer Tolstov (1948), using ethnographic and archaeological materials, refers to the pre-Islamic “secret associations” of men that slowly transformed from collective units of generations supervised by elderly men of different classes, to diverse units of male associations with different age groups and with their own structures. These associations were based on a strict system of penalties with the aim of raising disciplined men. They carried out competitions and entertained themselves with dances and the singing of *bachcha*, professional male dancers.²¹³ The members also participated in initiation rituals, such as for the wedding

²¹¹ *Choikhona* [Uz.] is a teahouse.

²¹² *Mekhmonhona* [Uz.] is a guestroom for both genders.

²¹³ Soviet scholars identify the *bachcha*'s dancing (professional male dancers) as erotic and transvestite, since *bachcha* were invited to perform for the young group of unmarried rich youth (Lewin, 1996; Tolstov, 1948). They assert the conceptions of primitivism associated with the institution of *bachcha* that relates to the epistemological privilege of Central Asia and the East where they originated with the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian beliefs and rituals, mysticism, and, interestingly enough, with matriarchy in Central Asia. The identity of *bachcha* is not only entertaining, but also despotic since orders to mercy or punishment were carried out without demur; consequently “he [*bacha*] seemed not to be a hired slave whose responsibility is to entertain guests.” Tolstov and Snesarev regard the character and form of dance as female. The scholars' European narrative attitude is

of a groom who belonged to the network. The organization of delivering the ritual of a collective meal changed from men contributing to the collective meal through collective production and consumption, to the individual delivering the entire meal.

Tolstov (1948) sees the *gap* as the remnants of the primitive communal system in ancient and medieval Central Asia that has no relationship to cultural norms.

Tolstov's view of *gap* constitutes the representation of *Other* in his narrative. In focusing on the western empires of the 19th-20th centuries, Said (1993) analyzed how cultural forms such as novels were ground-breaking in shaping imperial attitudes, references, and experiences (p. xii). Thus, narratives (novels, fiction, and other literature) present a "structure of attitude and reference" that give the right to the colonizers "to hold on to an overseas territory, derive benefits from it, depend on it, but ultimately refuse it autonomy or independence" (Said, 1993, p. 193).

Tolstov's depiction forms a narrative structure for readers to employ imperial lenses of narrative attitude and reference which is the power centre, an imperial production of knowledge that relates to political power. Such narratives "participate in, are part of, contribute to an extremely slow, infinitesimal politics that clarifies, reinforces, perhaps even occasionally advances perceptions" (Said, 1993, p. 75) about the periphery or *Other*. As Edward Said (1993) indicates, these narrative structures relate to the structures of attitude and reference that raise the question of power. In the literature, an unusual organic continuity can be seen between the earlier narratives that are normally not thought by scholars to have much to do with empire and the later narratives that are clearly about it.

Contrary to Tolstov (1948), Snesev (1963) connects the disappearance of *gaps* in the 1930s with the Soviet empire's collectivization policy and its ideology

hard to conceptualize in drawing the lines between male and female: long hair, women's dress, etc. Neither Snesev nor Tolstov question their understanding of femininity and masculinity, nor do they consider the actual oppression of *bachchas*.

that led to the creation of a new spiritual man who has a “wide worldview and does not realize wild traditions and images originated in past centuries of *gashtaks* and *ziefats*” (p. 205), in turn leading to the disappearance of traditional networks and ultimately changing the Central Asian image of villages. Contrary to Snesev, who stresses the achievements of the Soviet policy, the local scholar Arifkhanova (2000) explains the decay of *gap* in the 1930s as an outcome of the time of repressions when people were arrested for performing *namaz* and reading religious literature. Clearly, the continuity of imperial policy is a narrative, conveyed by scholarship, whose main goal is not to advocate giving up the colony, but to take the long range view that since they fall within the “orbit” of Russian dominance, that “dominance is a sort of norm, and thus conserved along with the colonies” (Said, 1993, p. 74).

The functions and ways of delivering *gaps* have been changing over time due to political, socio-economic, and cultural transformations. The elderly, economically stable men rotated in turns by providing food at their expense, while youth pooled resources to arrange *tukma*²¹⁴ and contributed food to the collective meal (Bikzhanova, et al., 1974; Tolstov, 1962). In *tukma*, the young men socialized, read religious books, exchanged information, performed *namaz* (prayed), and in some cases learned through apprenticeship (Arifkhanova, 2000). In *gaps*, the wealthy had luxurious food such as meat soup, *osh/plov*, *kazi*,²¹⁵ and *narin*, which were the favourite foods among Uzbeks in Tashkent and the Fergana oasis. The poor strata of the society usually prepared one main dish, *plov* (Arifkhanova, 2005).

In the past, *gaps* functioned as informal institutions of the management of *mahalla* (neighbourhood) wherein people discussed communal and individual problems (Arifkhanova, 2005). *Gaps* represented self-government institutions

²¹⁴ *Tukma* [Uz.] is a party.

²¹⁵ *Kazi* [Uz.] is a horse-meat sausage.

whereby the leader of the association exercised arbitration to solve internal and community conflicts; his power was recognized as legitimate by the local authorities (Snesarev, 1963). In addition to conflict resolution, *gaps* were also anti-colonial institutions when *Jadids* appropriated them for new aims to carry out cultural, political, and socio-economic reforms against the Russian Tsarist invasion (Khalid, 1998). *Gaps* were also a venue at which people performed the folk literature of unknown authors. *Gaps* also provided an opportunity to acquire knowledge such as news about fertilizers when mass media was not common (Hiwatari, 2008). In the 1950s the tradition of holding *gaps* was revived again despite material hardships after World War II, the time of the reconstruction of the Soviet Union (Arifkhanova, 2000).

Women's Agency and Symbolic Capital

Evidence of women's engagement in *gaps* first arises in the nineteenth century in Kokand when a group of women started to recite their poems at these gatherings. Turkestani women did not take part in the male public space, but met frequently with their friends for talks, feasting, religious education, and discussion (Khairullaev, 1990 cited in Kamp, 2006). Snesarev (1963) indicates that in the Khorezm region women of the host's household prepared meals when their husband hosted *gaps* in *mehmonhona* or they sent the meal with their husbands to the event. Women left the house when their husbands hosted an event and doors and windows were closed when a gathering was held. Snesarev (1963) asserts that strict isolation of women does not relate to Islam, and that it was less visible in rural areas in comparison with urban areas, but he refers to the taboo on women's participation in men's gatherings.

Women's agency in participating, shifting, and re-creating the landscape has been subject to power contestations at different levels: between men and women, and

vis-à-vis the Soviet regime of emancipation of women and post-Soviet policies towards Islam.

During the early Soviet period, the Communist activists tried to replace gaps with these new forms of the evening gatherings at clubs and libraries, among people of different sexes, ages, and occupations, especially youth. Snesev (1963) explains that a “book that was not known in *kishlok*,²¹⁶ became the women’s friend. What has been the source of isolation and lack of culture and the only entertainment became unnecessary and not interesting” (p. 205). As part of the imperial machine and scholarship drawing on his narrative reference and attitude, Snesev articulates Eurocentrically the relationship between the imperial power and the cultural representation of women.

In the 1970s *gap* was revived again especially in urban areas, and it was no longer confined to men only but also was comprised of women, or consisted both of women and men belonging to different social status. These networks confirmed the status system by making it a matter of prestige to belong to a group with high status members (Koroteyeva & Markova, 1998). Besides social aspects – these networks aimed to not only strengthen social networks but also display social status through conspicuous consumption – involved the reciprocal exchange of valuable consumer goods. This correlated with the era of Soviet consumerism under Brezhnev, a time of relative prosperity which resulted in more lavish expenditures for weddings, dowries, and ritual gifts (Kandiyoti, 1998). Yet the ban on private entrepreneurship and the lack of other investment opportunities led to the investment of money into the gift economy, specifically to the reciprocal exchange of gifts at life cycle rituals that also consolidated social and financial capital.

²¹⁶ *Kishlok* [Uz.] is a village.

The indigenous people converted wages that they earned from the Soviet public sector into consumption and ceremonial goods, a logical economic strategy. Money was a routine means of exchange but had restricted value in an economy with chronic shortages. As a result, natives converted money into quasi-money and used it as a store of value which would preserve or increase in value.

The exchange of goods and money was considered accumulation rather than expenditure. The gifts collected from relatives and neighbours helped a family to deliver a wedding without borrowing. In addition, the gift economy allowed the redistribution of resources from richer relatives to others among kinship groups. This method of redistribution clarifies why expenditures on rituals considerably surpass the formal revenues of families, a mystery that puzzled observers who thought that the entire population was engaged in illegal informal activities (Koroteyeva & Markova, 1998). This “native regime of consumption” (Koroteyeva & Markova, 1998, p. 581) geared towards traditional practices and extension of social networks of reciprocity further defined the separation between native and European groups.

In spite of changes in official policy, the resilience of women’s rituals can be explained in terms of their embeddedness in local notions of communal participation and their function in the reproduction of everyday communal life. In the post-colonial period, ritual has become a place to show the increasing disparities in wealth and status through the medium of consumption. This has led to government propaganda campaigns against ostentation. Even though the idea behind these projects is different from that of Soviet modernizers, they both locate ritual life at the core of Uzbek sociality and target women as the custodians of local customs (Kandiyoti & Azimova, 2004). Hence, there is a continuity of the Soviet colonial project of modernization by the current government. Women use opportunity structures such as informal networks

that constitute anti-colonial social movements to change existing social practices leading to social transformations in the local space.

In many ways, women's agency is linked to alternative social structures such as *gap* and other informal networks in the local *mahalla* that form habitus. Habitus is a set of skills and social practices that are acquired through experiences and practices from which power stems (Bourdieu, 1990), and that has become the basis of social structural change. In the case of women's economic networks in the Tashkent *oblast*, women of different ages and status are "agents" who interact with *gap*. They are "skilled and intense strategizers," to use Sherry Ortner's phrase (1996, p. 20), who constantly expand their network outside the *gap* as they enact it; yet, they are also defined and constructed by it to some extent.

Women's Gap: Power and Agency

Meaning-Making, Voice, and Knowledge

The most common and sustainable network of *gaps* was among elder women who got together regularly and who had known each other for an extensive period of time. These women have big social networks and high social status and are enmeshed in multiple networks. The interaction of women with multiple social structures of *gap* and their products can be considered to create what Bourdieu (1990, 1991) called "symbolic capital," each having its own distinctive value and also different from capitalist logic.²¹⁷ He indicates that symbolic capital consists of three forms: economic (money and possessions); social (connections and networks with persons of high social status); and cultural (education, cultural objects). Women utilise *gap* to make meaning of events, which often involves their raising concern about social

²¹⁷ Bourdieu (1990, 1991) argues that societies are stratified along class lines. He understands class as the embodiment of exploitation and domination in the social structure.

issues such as unemployment, domestic abuse, and migration. Women also gossip, plan and arrange weddings, and complain about family or other issues. *Gap* is a space where women address social problems, create knowledge, and formulate actions to solve livelihood dilemmas.

These women had multiple livelihood activities in Soviet times. They usually worked in the state sector in Soviet collective farms, and raised fruits, vegetables, and silk cocoons to fulfill the five-year plans of the Soviet state economy. They were also tailors, teachers, and nurses in public institutions. Yet, in the Soviet period, these women were also engaged in the bazaar economy, trading horticultural produce from the household and/or at the local bazaars, and generating additional income for the household. Their agency was expressed in crossing borders and moving within the state and bazaar economy to conduct family rituals, birth rituals, weddings, and funerals that require large amounts of money, materials, and human labour. Women utilize *gaps* not only to entertain themselves, but also to create and cement social networks of help and reciprocity to carry out rituals, and to exchange information about family and community issues and events.

Nargiza opa, a 65-year-old widow, receives 80,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$44) as a pension for her work on the *kolkhoz*, raising silk cocoons, which she has done for 26 years. She became an *otin*²¹⁸ in 2007, a time when there were official restrictions against conducting female religious events. Nargiza opa, like many other *otins*, possesses symbolic capital in the form of Islamic ceremonial knowledge of the *Qur'an*, *Shari'ah*, customary law, and *hadith*.²¹⁹ She further had the ability to exercise authority and to share power and responsibility for preserving harmony and social cohesion in the community. Following Giddens (1979), who advanced notions of

²¹⁸ *Otin* [Uz.] is a religious teacher who teaches Qur'anic classes to girls and women. The *otin* is also a religious leader who holds the ceremony in Muslim female gatherings.

²¹⁹ *Hadith* [Uz.] is a sacred saying of the Prophet.

interaction between agency and structure, I propose that *otins* exercise their agency through shaping knowledge of the social order among women who reproduce this knowledge in their families and community. In Ok Yul, *gaps* serve as a space for carrying out social practices such as *mavlud* conducted through the mobilisation of the *otins*' knowledge and capabilities required for the production of these social practices. Hence, *otins* produce and reinforce cultural knowledge and behaviour by transmitting values and reshaping a new social space.

Nargiza opa's network members meet more than once a month and each pays the equivalent of four kilograms of meat, 30,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$16). All the members of the network take turns hosting an event, usually at homes, until the full rotation is completed and then a new rotation starts. In this gap, each hostess receives 450,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$251) upon hosting the social event. The *jo'ra boshi* collects money and keeps track of turns and money contributions. Nargiza's circle of women consists of mothers-in-law living in extended households, whose children mostly are married. For example, Nargiza opa's four children are married and she resides with her son who runs a furniture workshop, a daughter-in-law who graduated from the medical college and takes care of household duties, and one grandson who is responsible for raising three cattle.

Nargiza opa's husband, Tohir aka, used to be a university professor. The education and attitudes that men bring into marriage may in certain contexts be constructive for women's well-being and empowerment (Kabeer, 1999; Tursunova & Azizova, 2009). For example, in Bangladesh, women's labour engagement was found to be more directly linked with male education than their own (Khandker, 1988). The conducive effect of her husband's education and Nargiza opa's belief in the importance of education can be associated with their investment in higher education

for all their four children. She was engaged in multiple strategies: participation in *gap*, paid employment, agricultural trade, and sewing:

I am happy I grew silk cocoons. I did not study [*she has secondary education only*]. I did not work anywhere. I worked in the *ogorod*.²²⁰ I sold crops that I planted in the *ogorod*. I sold crops that I planted in the *ogorod*.

I made lots of money. I saved this money. I did not go to my parents-in-law to ask for money.

On this money we built a house. We slaughtered animals. We bought a car. We paid for the education of my daughters.

We also sold a cow. I kept my profit from one to two years to cover their educational expenses. The next year I borrowed 1,000 roubles. I paid it off. That is how we gave education to our children.

If one enters the university, the *sovchi*²²¹ comes for another one. When Omina got married, Mashkura was pregnant. I made *beshtik to 'y*.²²² I made *beshtik* and then conducted a wedding [*for another child*]. Then Bahrom entered the university. Ozoda got married. We held a *beshtik to 'y*. Tolib aka (her husband) swore and asked why we should celebrate this *beshtik to 'y*. I told him not to worry. I earned money and used it for *beshtik to 'y*. I sewed *kurpa*, *ko'rpacha* for the *beshtik*. For my grandchildren I hope to buy everything from the bazaar.

Nargiza opa's daughter explained to me that her mother conducts *gaps* for social purposes whereas her network members are interested to know when their turn will come so that they can use the accumulated money to buy manure, seeds, plastic, or whatever they need for household consumption.

Nargiza opa explained that the fact that she lives well now is because she did well at raising her son, who now, with her daughter-in-law, takes care of her. Her son's entrepreneurial activity can cover all household expenses, luxurious dishes, meat, fruits, and vegetables. Nargiza opa administers all issues in the household. She also wants to sell two cattle to cover *hajj* expenses to Mecca and slaughter one more cow after her arrival back from Mecca to carry out a social event. Nargiza opa uses her pension and *gap* money to buy gifts such as dresses, fabric, or other needed items to help her daughters to participate in social events.

²²⁰ *Ogorod* [Russ.] is a household garden.

²²¹ *Sovchilik* [Uz.] is expressing a wish to a potential bride's family to ask their daughter to marry their potential spouse. *Sovchi* [Uz.] is a matchmaker who usually visits parents of the future bride.

²²² *Beshik to 'y* is a celebration for the birth of a child.

Preparation for the *gap* requires help from the community and especially close kin members. A close relative may help to clean the house, cook, bake, and/or bring somsa, cake, or salad. Nargiza opa's *gap* was attended and supported by two kin generations. Her three daughters brought cakes, salad, and fruits. Her daughter-in-law laid the table and cooked *manti*. In return, Nargiza provides them with support by assisting in life-cycle ritual activities. The opportunity to provide support in conducting the *gaps* allows the daughters when permitted by mothers-in-law to visit their natal homes and get connected to their residual social networks of neighbours and relatives. Sometimes daughters come with their children who socialize with their kin members, acquire moral knowledge, and engage in mutual visits and celebrations of birthdays.

In addition to meeting social needs, *gaps* allow women to heal, share ideas, brainstorm, and develop action plans to solve conflicts. Women reported that the young kin members may come earlier or stay after the *gap* for a sleep-over to share life issues: divorce, marriage, children's education, health, relationships with sisters-in-law, and property issues. They do not participate in the *gap* but greet and serve the guests.

For example, Nargiza's granddaughter, who got married six months ago, came to help with the *gap*, as she stated to her parents-in-law. Yet, I did not see her helping in the *gap*, but rather crying and telling her mother and aunts about her fear of having a second miscarriage. She was worried that she would have to be hospitalized in the future to save this pregnancy. It was frightening for her to receive disapproval from her parents-in-law for staying in the hospital for some time to save a child. Her mother and aunts spoke about it and advised her to ask her parents-in-law to allow her to stay in the hospital, and in case of disagreement, her mother and her aunts would

come to discuss this issue with the in-laws. The issue was solved positively and the parents-in-law did not have any objections.

In a different *gap*, Marguba, a single mother who divorced her husband after her first year of marriage and pregnancy, comes to see her aunt and also help during social get-togethers. Because she lives in her parental home since her divorce, she has more liberty than other young married women to move around and engage in mutual aid and reciprocity networks. Marguba told me that without consulting their parents, her brother sold her piece of land where she could have lived with her son separately from the extended household, and he invested this money into the construction of his house. Her mother, some of her aunts including the one she visited, and I brainstormed about the property conflict in the household. To restore justice, I suggested that Marguba's brother should buy her a piece of land. Marguba's aunt wanted her to have a bigger place in the extended household than she has now. Marguba listened to our dispute and said that she is not sure how to change things. Female gatherings can be a space to discuss women's issues and gender-based violence taking place in the families.

To determine the order of turn-taking, *gap* members consider financial needs, family circumstances, and time. Some, like Nargiza opa's group, draw names to decide turn-taking. However, Nargiza opa's network members changed the rotating pattern rule and the format of the *gap* to address one of the member's needs. Fatima opa, Nargiza opa's close neighbour and also a kin member, was constructing a new house in the *hovli* here she lives. Her son, a lorry driver, hired *mardikors* to dismantle the old house. Nargiza opa suggested to everybody to compromise, and not have a meal this time. They collected money and gave 450,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$251).

Gap's membership criteria can be classified according to gender, generation, and pre-existing social relationships (Hiwatari, 2008). The notion of generation is fluid and interlinks with identity and status. For example, exceptions were made for Lobar opa, a 51-year-old mother-in-law. She was asked by Nasiba opa and her *gap* members (in their 60s) to join the network in spite of her younger age. She played *gap* with them for one year and quit. They asked her to continue participating with them because she is a "different *kelin* (bride), not like others." She explained to me that she did not feel comfortable among old women as she is very young and they are much older than her. Yet, Lobar opa's purpose of joining the *gap* is strategic. She prefers to join a *gap* of 18 relatives who live far away in the city over the neighbourhood *gap* because she sees these women every day in her *mahalla*. She rationalizes her choice by the need to have social networks and capital: "We need to have relatives. There are days when there will be funerals. There will be days when we will have weddings and other events." As a result, she expands her social network and support outside the community where she resides.

In contrast to Nargiza opa's *gap* which has a sustainable membership of women, Lobar opa quit her *gap* with relatives two or three years ago. Her husband, a former firefighter who combined his public work with carpentry in Soviet and post-Soviet times, quit his job and they are left to survive on his pension. She had worked in the textile factory in Tashkent for 25 years but quit in 1990 because the commute from the village was too far and she had to take three buses to reach this factory. Lobar opa goes to help her husband for half an hour if he does his carpentry in the local community. When she checks to see if her husband is doing well and chats with neighbours, she finds some relief and distraction from economic difficulties. In addition, both husband and wife are engaged in self-subsistence farming in the

household plot of land with the size of eight *sotik*.²²³ They grow vegetables for their own consumption and corn for sale for extra cash. Their elder daughter got married five years ago (in 2004) and the youngest one two years ago (in 2006). When I wanted to sympathize with her and told her that I am sure that it was difficult to conduct two weddings at once, she articulated the importance of her husband and social capital:

I have a husband at my head. I have relatives, *mahalla*, and neighbours. People helped me a lot. The neighbours made *tog'ora*²²⁴, *tog'ora*. This helped a lot. Gulnoza came, Nargiza opa's kelin. She is so good.

Women's social network is strategic social capital conducive to mutual aid to redress financial constraints. Nargiza opa started participating in *gap* again upon her daughter's advice with the purpose of receiving a lump sum. Her decision to join the *gap* allowed her to purchase a heifer, a widespread form of investment people resort to when they need cash. Though the sale of cattle is a male activity, the income gained will be used in one pot in the household to cover food expenses, conduct rituals, treat sickness, or construct a house.

Distributive Justice and Agency

Gaps vary in size, composition, and purpose depending on the life cycle of the members of *gap* and their children and grandchildren. Women aged 40 and older utilize *gaps* to carry out the weddings of their children, the birth rituals of their grandchildren, or other social events. I met Gulnora opa at her mother's place on the occasion of her younger sister's return from the hospital after delivering a child. Gulnora is 46 years old, has some higher education, and has been working as a school teacher for 16 years. She quit her job because she realized that she could earn more by

²²³ *Sotik*, pl. *sotka* [Uz.] is one hundredth of a hectare. Eight *sotik* is 800 meters squared.

²²⁴ *Togora* [Uz.] is a metal pot used by women to carry traditional food.

doing *dehqonchilik* than by teaching. She had been living in an extended household with her parents-in-law and her husband's seven brothers for 15 years as the oldest bride, cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes.

Since her family moved out of the household eight years ago, Gulnora opa and her husband diversified household activities by together growing and trading agricultural products. She takes care of the greenhouse while her husband and 23-year-old son work as electricians in the public sector and privately. Not to make her husband lose face, she states that her husband mostly takes care of the greenhouse. In addition, they plant strawberries on two *sotik* of land. Her 16-year-old daughter works in a private textile workshop. Previously, her parents-in-law made decisions and managed the household affairs; now Gulnora and her husband function more as an autonomous unit and make decisions collaterally. She seeks advice from him, as "he is *hojain*"²²⁵ in their house. She gives an example of her trip to Kazakhstan when she bought clothes and resold them in Uzbekistan. On the income gained, she covered her son's tuition fees and some household expenses. She suggested to her husband that they buy a piece of land because they needed land for her son so that he will live there with his family.

Gulnora opa joined the neighbourhood *gap* three years ago because her children will marry soon. In her network, each member contributes 25,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$14), an equivalent of three kilograms of meat. Her network consists of 13 women in their 40s who are engaged in reciprocity and obligations to return equally the help that was provided for life cycle ritual activities. For example, they make 12 *tog'ora* in total when someone of the group members has a wedding. Each woman undertakes the responsibility of making salad, baking, or cooking *manti* or *narin*. Although some

²²⁵ *Hojain* [Uz.] is a male head of the household.

dishes are more expensive than others, they do not negotiate costs; the wealthier allocates more to the life cycle rituals and if someone contributes more they believe that this is *savob*, for Allah's way. The *Shari'ah* persuades believers that giving (Ar., *ithar*) in the path of God is part of the social and economic development of Islamic life (Nasr, 2004). Giving is part of restorative justice, I suggest, grounded in peace processes and outcomes, a part of ensuring the presence of justice, satisfaction of all basic needs such as survival, well-being, freedom, and identity.

It was also apparent that the poor strata of the society could not always participate in *gap*; and if they did, the network consisted of a maximum of five members who drew in 5,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$2.70). They usually preferred to have a meal in the cafeteria or a restaurant. These networks typically last two to three years and break up after some period of time because the members are not financially capable to make a contribution. Their inability to engage in social and economic networks is embedded in social isolation that is a cause of poverty. However, villagers informally invite women of different social status to share a meal after having their social event. The community members also bring food and other resources to the needy; they provide them with livelihood activities by asking them to cook and bake for social events.

Reaching consensus and being respectful to the needs of each person is key to women's negotiation of mutual reciprocity. Gulnora opa pointed out that the "relatives do not help but we help as a team" because it is hard for relatives to come due to the distance or shortage of time. She told me that she is constrained to visit her relatives and to always help them because she lives far away.

Conflict Resolution and Healing

Depending on social status and economic and social power and because they tend to have more stable livelihood activities than younger women, mostly middle-aged women participate in multiple social networks. Middle-aged women have more leisure time because their children have grown up and help about the house. In this context, the use of power, as Giddens (1984) described it, features not in a particular type of behaviour but in all action, and power is not by itself a resource. Resources are a means to exercise power, an element of social reproduction encoded in social relations built on the autonomy and dependence of all actors. Women have cultural knowledge of conflict resolution and exercise their spirit agency²²⁶ to solve interpersonal relations and heal individuals and communities.

Rahima opa, 47-years-old, has been working in a pharmacy for about 23 years. In 1993, when economic difficulties emerged, she decided to travel to Poland to buy clothes. She did not make money out of this trip, but more problematic, she lost her health because of her stress when her goods were checked at the customs control. She lost her voice and spent a great deal of money to restore her health. Since then, she decided to stay home, continuing to work in a pharmacy three days per week. Her husband, Murod, works at the railroad station, engaged in self-subsistence farming on their household plot, eight *sotik* of land. Murod has a share-cropping arrangement with his friend who, with his wife, plants spinach on Murod's land. Murod and Rahima opa are supporting Murod's mother, their son who is a student in Tashkent University, their *kelin*, and their seven-month-old grandson. Rahima opa is engaged in three *gaps*. The first *gap* is with her seven female colleagues from the pharmacy who

²²⁶ Spirit agency is a form of healing, that is, an imaginal encounter with spirit agents which constitutes a specific mode of access to divine knowledge and power through which persons validate their own particular notions of Muslim selfhood (Rasanyagam, 2006).

are also her relatives. They contribute 35,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$19). Her second *gap* is with ten relatives with a contribution of 30,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$16). The third *gap* is with six neighbours with a contribution of 20,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$11).

It was apparent that most middle-aged and older women with bigger social networks and high social status in the community are enmeshed in multiple networks. The interaction of women with multiple social structures of *gap* and their products can be considered as “symbolic capital,” each having its own distinctive value. Zulfiya opa pursues the possession of symbolic capital through the following ways: Zulfiya opa, *kinnaji* (healer), possesses cultural capital in terms of her abilities and skills to heal people in the community (See chapter 7). She also increases her economic capital by participating in four *gaps*. Her networks are with her husband’s eight relatives, with twelve neighbours from her *mahalla*, with seven of her mother’s relatives, and with twelve of her father’s relatives. She draws out: 105,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$58) from her husband’s network where each member contributes 15,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$8); 275,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$153) from mahalla’s *gap* where each member contributes 25,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$13); 210,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$117) from her mother’s network where each member contributes 35,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$19); and 385,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$215) from her father’s *gap* where each member contributes 35,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$19). Zulfiya opa’s social and economic capital with her participation in multiple *gaps* and cultural capital of being a healer create symbolic capital that enables her to direct *mahalla gap* for twenty years, and relatives’ networks for the last ten years. She has been investing her money in weddings and construction of her house.

Building on the capabilities approach to development (Nussbaum, 2000; A. Sen, 1999), I view multi-dimensional empowerment as the advancement of human capabilities in regard to social affiliation, economic empowerment, protective

security, and control over one's environment. Sen (1999) refers to "capabilities" to describe the space within which the quality of life can be enhanced. Zulfiya opa's capabilities relate to her economic empowerment in terms of fulfilling the main role of a provider in her family and working in a shop as a salesperson for 20 years, as a seamstress in a textile workshop making embroidered dresses for almost three years, and as an accountant and cashier for 17 years where she learned her skills on the job. Her husband is an invalid, and her son is a driver. Her *kelin*, a medical technician, for whose education Zulfiya opa paid, mobilizing her economically, gives injections to her neighbours at home. Zulfiya opa's total working experience of 40 years resulted in securing a monthly pension of 100,000 *so'm* (\$55). Her multi-dimensional empowerment as demonstrated by her capabilities in terms of her leadership qualities, intelligence in strengthening her social capital through cultural knowledge of healing practices, and socio-economic empowerment in carrying out and participating in *gap* enables her to organize and also empower community members in her *mahalla*.

Young *Kelins'* Gaps and *Chernaya Kassa*

Agency and Bargaining Power

In the local communities in Ok Yul, *kelins*, young brides who live with their husbands' families, constitute a disadvantaged group due to the different dimensions of "regional patriarchy" (Kandiyoti, 1998). The first dimension relates to *kelins'* ability to engage in livelihood activities, which is limited by cultural norms related to marriage, childbirth, childcare, and the gendered division of household duties. The second dimension links to the internal extended household structure with its gender asymmetries in the allocation of different types of resources; men have more extended access to land and education than women. Usually, the young new *kelins* do not have the means to participate in rotating networks because they lack time and disposable

income, and because they have small social networks in their new residential place of their husband's household.²²⁷

Many of women's traditional disadvantages *vis-à-vis* men originate from their shortage of empowerment, considered as weak bargaining power in the milieu of the decision making household (A. Sen, 1990). The weakness of young women's bargaining power is partially a consequence of the traditional gendered division of labour²²⁸ which limits women's choices to engage in income-generating activities (Kabeer, 1997). The majority of young *kelins* have limited bargaining power as they tend to focus on productive and reproductive functions; hence, they are less likely to be engaged in traditional rotating social and micro-credit networks.

Massicard and Trevisani (2003) indicate the hierarchical nature of the decision-making expressed in younger people's respect towards their elders and elders' authority both in the family and in the community. Wall (2006) argues that the household members who follow the decision of the head of the household are compliant. In contrast, I suggest that the overt demonstration of compliance of Uzbek women is similar to that shown by women in South Asia as described by Agarwal (1997): that is, compliance "need not mean that women lack a correct perception of their best interests, rather it can reflect a survival strategy stemming from the constraints on their ability to act overtly in pursuit of those interests" (pp. 24-25). Agrawal agrees with Sen (1990) that "it can be a serious error to take the absence of protests and questioning of inequality as evidence of the absence of that inequality" (p. 126). As she puts it "Compliance need not imply complicity" (pp. 37-38).

²²⁷ Some girls are married in their home villages, but many marry outside, and move to the husband's village or neighborhood, leaving behind their own networks.

²²⁸ Young brides are supposed to do housework and have their first child after the marriage immediately.

Similarly, Harris (2000), who conducted her study in Tajikistan on control and subversion of both women and men, suggests the notion of “gender masks” (p. 28) whereby both sexes perform the positions of dominance and subordination. Furthermore, differences exist within both dominant and subordinate positions of gender. Harris calls different gender performances semi-conscious enactments of features encrypted into the body, which are varied by persons according to situation and audience. Building on Butler’s (1995) idea of performativity, Harris argues that it is impossible to fully internalize gender because women perform consciously and deliberately their multiple identities; consequently, none of these identities has been entirely internalised. In this study, women in positions of subordination strategically disobey rules, norms, and practices that limit their choices. They bargain with the constraints of the opportunity structure of the household. Women overcome these restraints by mobilizing others to set up a new space of economic and social empowerment.

I employ a bargaining framework to see how the household unit functions as a space of co-operative conflict where collaboration and struggle exist at the same time; in the household, different privileges and advantages are achieved by members through cooperation with others. However, conflicts exist due to different interests, values, and claims to scarce status and resources, in which the parties try to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the opponents in the interaction space. *Kelins* exercise multi-dimensional bargaining power where their agency improves some aspects of life while other aspects may deteriorate. These women comprise a heterogeneous category belonging to different age and life-cycle stages, social statuses, classes, occupations, and types and sizes of household. Their engagement in social networks has different

agendas, goals, strategies, and means of implementation that can be simultaneously empowering and disempowering to them and others.

Empowerment: Bargaining Within the Household

Shohina opa is a 50-year-old mother of two sons. In spite of her age, she identifies herself and is identified by the community members as a *kelin* because she has not yet become a mother-in-law. She married her cousin²²⁹ by her own choice at age 30, which she and others view as late. Shohina opa told me that she moved to her natal house with her husband and children to take care of her sick mother after living in her husband's extended household for three years. The villagers perceived an issue over the workload between Shohina and her *qaynsingil*, or sister-in-law, but not with her mother-in-law. The co-operative conflict was between Shohina opa and her husband, Sardor, *vis-à-vis* her *qaynsingil*, Sitora (See more about Sitora in chapter 5), that resulted in the separation of cooking meals and the emergence of a new small kitchen next to the rooms of a couple that symbolizes contested space. The bargaining power of Shohina was asymmetrical, aimed to enhance the resources of her nuclear family but not those of the entire household; her position and actions contradict the idea of *bir qozon* in extended households. She now has a separate pot, cooks for her own family, and also, through her husband, owns two rooms with a kitchen and eight *sotik* of land for gardening.

The dramatic change that took place in extended households after the post-Soviet period is the erosion of mutual support among household and kin members that was usually characterized by a high degree of interdependency and intra-gender and

²²⁹ Cousin marriage is not common in Ok Yul. In this case, Shohina opa's strategy was the last resort to get married at the age of 30. She married her mother's sister's son.

cross-gender support in household work, social life, and work. Ethnographers recorded intra-household conflicts between brides and mothers-in-law (Kandiyoti, 1999b), yet women in my research location reported that many of the conflicts that took place within households were among *kelins* and *qaynsingils*.

The issue for Sitora and many other women in the village is based on the fact that they did not marry in their 20s, and thus stayed at their parental house. The distribution of resources no longer takes place only among brothers but also with the single women. Shohina opa's fall-back position, the main determinant of bargaining power and who gains more when controversial cooperation with her other extended members breaks down, was to leave. She uses moving to live with her ill parents in the city just next to the village as a deliberate strategy that her husband and children accommodate easily to leave her extended husband's household. By moving to her parents' house she reconnected with her old social networks, relatives, and *mahalla* members. She leaves her furniture in two rooms in her husband's house and locks these rooms to prevent their usage. Locking two rooms and leaving furniture caused frustration for other household members as they could not benefit by using them except during important social events when Shohina allowed them to host an event there.

Shohina opa's agency is a bundle of paradoxes. On the one hand, she exercises her choice and gains autonomy that I believe to be synonymous with empowerment phrased in individualistic terms, meaning control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial) and over ideology (values, beliefs, attitudes). Her empowerment signifies not only greater intrinsic control, but also a growing intrinsic capability – greater self-confidence, and inner transformation of her own consciousness that enables her to overcome external obstacles to accessing resources

or changing traditional ideology (Batliwala, 1994). Shohina opa's empowerment goes against the traditional ideology of *kelins*, who are disempowered to move as they would then lose the status of actually living as *kelins* in *mahalla*.

Empowerment may be also seen as a collective rather than an individual process based on entrepreneurship and self-reliance rather than cooperation, to challenge power structures (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). Empowerment cannot be considered only in terms of choice, but must integrate an assessment of values demonstrated in agency and choice, the values which reveal a broader context (Kabeer, 1999). Shohina opa's agency is individual and not collective and directly builds on her and her family's autonomy that is gained through movement to her natal house. However, while her agency benefits her in terms of having power in decision-making and voice, she does not necessary challenge the structural power of the extended household. Shohina opa deals with neither regional patriarchies nor the gender imposed constraints of contexts where women are denied the right to inherit property due to cultural norms (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1996). She inherited land from her parents and the house where she hosts an *ichki kuyov*.

Shohina opa exercises her autonomous agency in the production of resources by participating in three networks that open opportunities for more luxurious consumption beyond food. She is building a house on the money obtained from participation in *chernaya kassa* and *gap* in addition to funds from her waged employment salary of 240,000 *so'm*. She plans to buy windows and a door for the kitchen to finish building a house for one of her sons. Shohina opa also invests money in the education of her children, and this cost restricts her ability to finish the construction of the new house. She bought a computer for 1.5 million *so'm* (U.S. \$837) and kitchen furniture in the amount of 1.8 million *so'm* (U.S. \$1,005). Shohina

opa's household portfolio consists of waged employment: she works in the airport; her husband Sardor, with higher education, works as a taxi driver during the first half of the day; and her 21-year-old son works in the furniture workshop and recently brought his father to work with him. Shohina opa explained to me that her eldest son needs money for his wedding and is doing his best to save as much as possible. Her younger son entered college this year. Shohina opa is enmeshed in three networks. Her first network is the *gap* comprising her 10 relatives living in the same neighbourhood. She draws out 500,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$279) from this network where each member contributes 50,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$28) each two weeks. She participates in two other networks called *chernaya kassa*.

Rotating savings groups such as *chernaya kassa* are distinguished from the traditional *gap* because they fill primarily an economic rather than a social function. This savings group originated in Soviet times, and is widespread among wage-earners in institutions whereby each person pays a monthly share proportionate to his or her salary and waits his/her turn to take the lump sum. This practice does not require delivering a social gathering among co-workers and the preparation of a luxurious meal. Kandiyoti (1998) indicates that this practice was an expedient way of dealing with the fact that neither the banking system nor the market was helping skilled workers with average incomes to purchase more expensive goods. In a situation where people are hardly covering their household expenses, this seems to be a flexible response to the shortage of cash in the system, the growing inability to save, and the rising cost of living.

Shohina opa's second *chernaya kassa* is with her ten colleagues. She contributes 30,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$16) and receives 300,000 *so 'm* (U.S. \$160) in her turn. The third savings network is an innovative *chernaya kassa*, comprising three

categories of brides: new brides, brides who were married for several years, and older brides from the same *mahalla* whose children are going to marry in few years. The *kelins* participating in *chernaya kassa* belong to different social statuses, some working in the public or private sectors and some unemployed. Every second Saturday, 10,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$5) is collected from 10 members and given to the person expecting her turn, for a total of 100,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$55). In determining the amount, they considered the small amount that each *kelin*, including the unemployed, is able to contribute.

As power struggles and negotiation are not only between men and women but are often more visible and dynamic between female members of the household, this network is a mechanism for *kelins* to resist that power. It was evident that mothers-in-law try to control the social networks (*gap*, *chernaya kassa*, and other networks) of daughters-in-law, especially young *kelins*, being afraid of rumours and gossip.²³⁰ At first, the agenda was to build bridges between *kelins* to empower them economically and socially. In fact, the network originated through the initiative of the older *kelins* who had higher status and more power in their households. They all also realized that they do not need the social recreational aspect because they connect informally by stopping by at someone's place or meeting when children play outside their *hovli*. Rather, their need for economic empowerment is satisfied through this network of *chernaya kassa*. Other younger *kelins* used drawn money at their own discretion, taking advantage of the people's belief that "good" mothers-in-law leave money drawn from saving networks to daughters-in-law. Clearly, *kelins'* alliances are organized as a communal strategy for empowerment, but are deeply motivated by individual gain.

²³⁰ In this dissertation, I consider gossip as a means of conflict resolution exercised through social control and empowerment especially when women condemn abusive behavior of men, women, or children.

Autonomy and Agency

I found out that most *kelins* who used to live in the city before marriage have higher education, but many dropped their teaching careers because of poor financial incentives. They wanted to continue teaching, but the financial burden to perform ritual activities and also the desire to buy luxurious things were so high that they gave up their wishes. Nazira (See chapter 5), a 35-year-old former school teacher with three children says:

I was a teacher and became a *dehqon* with a higher education diploma. My salary is low and it makes sense to do *dehkonchilik* rather than work in a school because it allows me to feed the family better. But I like to work in the public sector as I am energetic by nature.

Members of this category of workers have moved from higher to lower social status because it financially benefits them. Nazira agreed to quit her job upon her husband's suggestion, but this decision was not approved by her mother-in-law who, in Soviet and post-Soviet times, taught literature in school in addition to her strawberry and garlic growing and her agricultural trade. Nazira pursued a livelihood activity new to her, growing tomatoes in the greenhouse. She started generating a great deal of income that supplemented her husband's salary of 500,000 *so'm* (\$279) in the public sector.

This household accumulation strategy resulted in higher power and autonomy for Nazira's nuclear family and consolidated socio-economic power. Nazira's family appropriated land for the greenhouse to grow tomatoes for trade and bought a car, a television, and carpets. This economic power led to economic disparity within the family's extended household comprised of three generations: Nazira's husband's parents, Nazira's family, Nazira's husband's younger brother and his family, and Nazira's husband's divorced sister who returned to her natal home with her son.

Autonomy – individual's capacity to determine goals and act on them (Kabeer, 1999)

is applicable to Nazira's as opposed to the family's empowerment. Nazira backs up her high power and status by occasionally allowing her *ovsun*,²³¹ Hadija, or *qainana*,²³² Oinisa, to sell tomatoes and earn a small share. Nazira pursues her individual empowerment because she gets most of the profit. Persons with high power perceive their own self-interests and individually empower themselves to accumulate resources; they reinforce inequalities and inequities within extended families. The visibly greater bargaining position of Nazira results in her family's enjoyment of a larger share of resources, such as land and a house.

Nazira's decision to join the teacher's *gap* comprised of her former school colleagues was aimed at accumulating social capital. This social network represents an important asset, one that can be called upon in crisis, enjoyed for its own benefit, and/or leveraged for material gain when needed. She wants to keep social ties and her high status even though she is engaged in agricultural work. She has been associated with this network for five years since quitting her teaching job. The network consists of 15 teachers who contribute 10,000 *so'm* (U.S. \$5). Nazira's family bought a television and refrigerator and are also investing money into building a new house on the extended household plot of land. Once, after she hosted a *gap*, her husband bought wood for the house they are constructing instead of the golden chain they both agreed to buy. Gold is usually a form of investment that is sold in situations when money is needed for social events such as marriage or other life cycle rituals. Nazira's mother-in-law disapproved of the fact that her son did not purchase a gold chain for his wife. Nazira tried to mediate the conflict by taking her husband's side, thinking that her husband bought wood for their house and he could buy the golden chain next time.

²³¹ *Ovsun* [Uz.] is a husband's brother's wife.

²³² *Qainana* [Uz.] is a mother-in-law.

It was apparent that *kelin* networks rotate small amounts of money depending on their life cycle stage, livelihood activities, household constraints and opportunities, and on the flow of money household members negotiate. All transactions were made in local currency in the village and were relative to the wealth of the participants. In contrast to village *gaps*, some *gaps* in the city made payments in U.S. dollars ranging from \$10 to \$100. Farida opa, 44-years-old daughter-in-law and living with her mother-in-law, husband, and three children in the city, has been engaged in small-scale trade for six years. She buys children's clothes in one of the biggest markets and resells them from her house to neighbours. Farida opa finds her livelihood activity advantageous as she does not pay taxes, spend money for transport, nor sit in the sun as a trader in the bazaar. She is able to cover some household expenses and, more importantly, to engage in mutual aid and reciprocity networks with her kin members by purchasing gifts and making *tog'ora*, activities that certainly strengthen her social ties and status.

Omina, Farida's sister, requested Farida opa to keep her money in the house to hide savings from the rest of the family.²³³ Farida opa decided to invest part of her sister's money in her business. Since this is no longer an extended household and money earned by both parents will be used for the benefit of all, Farida opa suggested to her husband to invest her sister's money and pay her back later. Her husband bought a piece of land and built a greenhouse to generate income in addition to his public employment job. He hires labourers to take care of the greenhouse.

Farida opa started playing *gap* two years ago when her business improved financially. Her network is mixed and consists of two sisters and three friends. They do not host the social event at home but prefer going to a restaurant or café, ordering

²³³ Women usually keep money in their close relative's house to hide savings.

food, and splitting the expenses among the six members. They each contribute U.S. \$100. The first time she played *gap*, her mother paid her contribution. The second time her mother could not pay and Farida started contributing money herself. Farida opa pays the *gap* fee for a friend who works in the Oriflame²³⁴ company to pay money off for the products she buys from her. She uses *gap* money to cover her son's tuition fee.

In contrast to the previous *gap* of *kelins* which resisted inter-household power, this and many other cases demonstrate that women neither fully comply, submit, compromise, nor accommodate to power over of extended household members, nor do they look for transcending solutions in the household. *Kelins* demonstrate variations of empowerment whereby they are able to transform their assets into meaningful livelihood activities that improve their well-being. The above-mentioned example of Shohina opa shows that she exercised agency in order to use her own land and sources of income to determine her own goals and roles. Farida opa exercises her agency and power through the pursuit of projects with intentions, purposes, and desires that can represent their values and meaning of empowerment. Furthermore, her agency in the sense of *bir qozon* is organized around the overt resistance, domination, and control of physical and natural environment that is different from collective pursuit and empowerment.

Migration, Inclusion and Exclusion

With the increasing migration from rural areas into the capital of Uzbekistan and into suburbs including *kishlok Ok Yul* since 1991, the composition of the members of *gaps* has changed dramatically. Migrants usually came from Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya and the Fergana Valley, the least developed regions

²³⁴ Oriflame is the company that sells cosmetics through contracted local agents.

(Tursunova, 2008a, 2008c).²³⁵ They settled down in the new parts of the *kishlok* where people from the village had purchased land when they moved out from their extended households. There was also a category of wealthy migrants, “the new Uzbeks,” who moved from the capital into the suburbs to live on a household plot of land. The newcomers from rural areas are mostly hired by local villagers in the informal sector to do agricultural work. The migrants and local villagers are engaged in *gaps* to get to know each other and provide help when needed. Yet, some migrants can be excluded from the *gap* and other social networks.

Samira, a 32-year-old *kelin*, moved out of her extended household to a new *mahalla* in the community (See livelihood activities of Samira in chapter 5). She had been living for eight years in an extended household, first working as a teacher in the college and then quitting her job because of poor incentives. She continued doing *dehqonchilik* with other extended household members. She thinks that because of her hard work, her parents-in-law built the house for her family from the resources of their one *qozon*. She and her husband and children have been living separately from the extended household network for six years, planting and selling cauliflower, cabbage, radishes, and tomatoes in spring, summer, and fall.

For three years, Samira participated in the neighbourhood *gap* comprised of 14 members. She decided to stop engaging with this network because of a conflict that took place between the network members. The conflict arose because Samira invited one woman from the rural area residing in this neighbourhood to join the *gap*:

There was one woman – she was so good to me. She came from a *kishlok*. We were few in the *gap*. And I thought that it would be good if she joins us. I asked the women if they are willing to let this woman join. They said that they are fine. After this woman joined us, the women from *gap* started talking

²³⁵ *Oblasts* [Russ.] is regions.

about me. They thought that I brought a “*kishloki*”²³⁶ to our *gap*. Then I quit. They asked me why I left the *gap*. I told them directly that they spread rumours about me and the fact that I brought this woman into our *gap*.

Hence, the *gap* is a space of contesting power where social relations are based on inclusion and exclusion; the latter is the process through which persons or groups are entirely or partially excluded from full participation in the society (Arjan De Haan, 1999). Social exclusion from *gap* networks can result in inequality traps that lead to persistent disparities in economic, political, and social opportunities that combine and continue over time to keep people in isolation and poverty.

More inclusion into social and economic networks of marginalized groups will lead to their socio-cultural participation in the community life to discuss, for example, common property resources such as sharing water and other economic resources that can also alleviate income poverty. *Gaps* as opportunity structures of shared identities could shape the norms and rules that manage social attitudes and behaviour of people to create a space to exercise political, cultural and economic rights. *Gaps* can be a space of empowerment and social inclusion which can ensure access to opportunity structures, that is, the institutional and natural environment people live in.

Conclusion

Tolstov and Snesarov’s narratives about *gaps* and socio-economic changes are imperialist representations and projections of colonial power. In contrast to their views of the *gap*, other scholarship from the Soviet period provides more useful insight into reasons that the *gap* took on new purposes in the late Soviet period. This study has shown that in Tashkent *oblast*, women’s engagement in social and

²³⁶ *Kishloki* [Uz.] is a derogatory term for people from rural areas. Even though the research area is a village that is located close to the capital and is part of the Tashkent region, villagers do not think that they represent *kishloki*. The outsiders who are from other rural areas are considered *kishloki* for them.

economic networks has increased during the expansion of the market-oriented economy for a number of reasons.

Women's networks have functioned as livelihood resilience mechanisms helping them to avoid economic risks in order to survive, cope, and accumulate household resources. In the context of rising unemployment, restricted access to farm land, and rising inflation, access to a lump sum of cash helps to overcome these socio-economic difficulties. At the time of this research, the price of the rent of one hectare of land (two million *so'm* for one year, U.S. \$1,117) made it difficult for locals to rent and make enough profit. Many farmers, especially those who grew cabbage, went bankrupt because the supply of the vegetables in the local markets exceeded the demand, leading to a price drop. Moreover, the commodification of land and the closure of the wood-working factory in the village pushed unemployed and underemployed locals to engage and depend extensively on diverse livelihood activities such as subsistence farming, the informal economy, and, to a small extent, the public sector. The radical change in the region is a shift to a market economy and also an increase in the population density due to regional migration from Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Fergana Valley, and the city of Tashkent; this population increase reduced the amount of available agricultural land. The increasing pressure on land may result in out-migration, a tendency that is not typical to this location.

Women's engagement in local social and economic networks can be considered counter-agency, a local social movement against the above-mentioned structural developments in Soviet and post-Soviet periods. If, in the socialist economy, *gaps* functioned as a gift economy to accumulate goods, nowadays *gaps* have multi-dimensional empowerment purposes due to socio-economic changes. *Gaps* function as social collateral, uniting and mobilizing women of different ages

and statuses to meet their needs. The networks are a space for mobilizing empowerment, where women exchange information about family issues, unemployment, property, pregnancy, their husbands' alcoholism, and economic changes such as rising costs. This and other studies (Hiwatari, 2008; Kandiyoti, 1998; Tursunova, 2008d) have demonstrated that *gaps* act to provide access to a lump sum of cash needed for making the purchases of luxury or durable goods for household and ceremonial use. This research further describes how *gaps* have provided critical supplement to livelihood activities to enable the purchase of seeds, cattle, agricultural supplies and construction materials and also for covering tuition fees. Clearly, informal networks contribute a substantial amount to the household economy. In addition, household members jointly strategize who participates in *gap* and thus determine economic and social outcomes.

Women provide reciprocal support and take mutual obligations towards each other among kin and community members during feasts and other occasions. For example, the food that was contributed to a wedding enables the household to avoid borrowing money. Investment in social networks of labour and goods allow families to accumulate social and financial capital for the long-term that might otherwise be spent less effectively. Furthermore, the study proved that in addition to different almsgiving methods such as *zakat* and *fitriyyah*, practiced in Ok Yul, *gaps* also perform a valuable redistributive function when the wealthier strata gives more money, goods, and help to people in need.

The case of classical patriarchy (Kandiyoti, 1988) was evident in the community researched when women accommodate to the system and are subordinate to the head of the patrilocal extended household and also senior women, especially their mothers-in-law. However, it can be argued that indirect methods of conflict

resolution can be applicable to these research findings as well. Young women act and define their goals strategically through engagement in *chernaya kassa*, an innovative project of economic mobilization that emerged in the Soviet times. These networks reconfigure space in terms of enhancing social networks and mobilizing financial contributions to the household.

Land reforms and commodification of life rupture family social organization and cohesion. It was apparent that the extended household structure is breaking up and the idea of “one pot” is slowly becoming less common. Young families pursue autonomous projects, separate from the extended household, and function as a nuclear unit. I suggest that this agency operates at the immediate level²³⁷ of individual agency, but strategic projects where resources are accumulated within one family contribute to the structural roots of inequality and inequity within the extended household. The delivery of *gaps* with *mavluds* is one form of community peacebuilding, creating knowledge that changes the socio-cultural and economic structures of inequality that were generation specific, as it is observed among elder women. *Gap* serves as a transformative mechanism to shape and reshape social relations to undermine structural inequalities in the households, kin, and communities that allow people to access resources and mobilize them for collective and social empowerment.

²³⁷ Kabeer (1999) suggests that processes of empowerment involve change at three levels and dimensions: the immediate level (personal agency and achievements), the intermediate (distribution of rules and resources), and the “deeper” level (structural relations of class, caste, gender).

CHAPTER 7

“CUTTING OUT THE KNOTS:” RITUALS AND PEACEBUILDING

Introduction

In the previous chapter I analyzed how social and economic networks of women’s *gap* empower women through and across a diverse spectrum of social, psychological, spiritual, and economic spheres. These processes of empowerment involve transformation; distributive justice; healing; mobilisation against patriarchy; and sharing human, natural, physical, and financial resources that emerge in social networks. Women who participate in *gap* may also engage in multiple networks of religious rituals such as *mavluds*,²³⁸ *ihsons*,²³⁹ ritual feasts such as *iftorlik*,²⁴⁰ *Qurban Hayit*,²⁴¹ *Laylat al-Qadr*,²⁴² and celebration of pre-Islamic holidays such as *Navruz*. Women use these events to exchange news of the *mahalla*, to look for advice, and to share about their own problems. Women’s rituals have a relational view focusing on the quality and nature of human relations to weave the web of social relationship and capital amongst community members. These gatherings provide an opportunity for socialization, recreation, and mutual support but also redistribution of wealth within the communities to support and empower individuals. Furthermore, these feminine

²³⁸ *Mavlud* [Uz.] is a commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

²³⁹ *Ihson* [Uz.] is a ceremony to honour Allah and to make special requests in order to receive blessing.

²⁴⁰ *Iftorlik* [Uz.] is breaking the fast during Ramadan.

²⁴¹ *Qurban Hayit* [Uz.] is the feast of sacrifice during Ramadan.

²⁴² *Laylat al-Qadr* is the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan (*ruza* in Uzbek), recognized as the Night of Power in English. The first verses of the Qur’an were revealed to the Prophet on the Night of Power and considered a night of great blessings granted by God as “better than one thousand and one months. Therein descend the angels and the Spirit by the permission of their Allah, with all their decrees.” When people carry out the Night of Power, they spend time in prayers and ask God to grant forgiveness for sin committed. When A’isha asked the Prophet what to tell during this night, he told her to say: “Allah, you love forgiveness, so forgive me” (El-Kholy, 1914-1993).

In Ok Yul, women started to carry out *Laylat al-Qadr* after the Independence. People knew about this ritual but could not practice it because of prohibitions in Soviet times. The official recognition of Ramadan and *Laylat al-Qadr* in media and the support of government in promoting the holiday led to the official recognition of this holiday. Women usually get together at someone’s house and recite the Qur’an during the night. The main purpose of the gathering is religious and spiritual development. Women do a potluck and have a meal such as *plov*, soup, salads, sweets and pastries.

rituals may reproduce domination and patriarchy but also challenge perspectives on patriarchy, domestic violence, and socio-economic issues which transform relationships and the way persons interact and interrelate with each other within their families, and communities.

The regaining of national memories and legacies of religion after colonization by Russia began in the 1980s when Gorbachev's Glasnost reforms permitted greater religious freedom, and has been progressing since Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991 (Khalid, 2007). Muslims started to rediscover Islam and Muslim culture and to understand in a "more reflexive way what it actually means to be Muslim" (Rasanyagam, 2006, p. 377). Hence, there were two interconnected contesting processes of the revival of religion: one that constitutes the self-representation and self-ascription of Muslim selfhood (Kandiyoti & Azimova, 2004) and the second one that is a "national phenomenon" (Khalid, 2007, p. 118). The "national phenomenon" is a state project to control religious activities by associating them with extremist or terrorist activities and "militant Islam" (Babadjanov, 2004; McGlinchey, 2007), as well as Islamic radicalism that is perceived as a threat to oppositional politics (Schoeberlein, 2001). Besides the perceived Islamic radicalism, new understandings of Islam emerged after people started to study in new schools such as Islamic universities, and going to *hajj*.

In this chapter, these new Islamic discourses influence gender relations, the expectations of women and their identities, and the positions of women in the society are examined. The focus is on how women in rural areas in Uzbekistan and the Tashkent *oblast* give voice to their knowledge and how they demonstrate alternative views to patriarchy and the growing modern scripturalist interpretations of Islam. The analysis is based on the feminist standpoint theories that claim distinctive of women's

ways of living and knowing (Harding, 1986; Smith, 1987) in order to identify and analyze the knowledge of community members.

Chapter Thesis

Hartman (1991) suggests that knowers move from silence to agency, from distress to doing, and from insecurity and dependence to security and self-reliance. Women's knowledge in Ok Yul is situated, historically, socially, personally constructed; women are conscious of the processes by which they construct knowledge and are also constructed by it. In analyzing women's rituals I interpreted symbols in three ways: (1) connection to social events; (2) the understandings of the women using the symbols; and (3) what women do in relationship to oppression and injustices. In this chapter I argue that women are agents enacting true, heterodox²⁴³ knowledge for peacebuilding and community empowerment, whereby they shape a space for negotiating and contesting knowledge regarding what constitutes Islam and its practices and thus, determine their multiple Muslim identities where they feel empowered and supported.

The thesis of this chapter is that *otin oyis*, healers, and women are engaged in peacebuilding processes through their access to divine power and knowledge. They produce, negotiate, and reproduce discursive knowledge together with and in interaction with the community for purposes of problem solving and positive personal and social change.²⁴⁴ These religious leaders and women reproduce and reconfigure discursive knowledge and pursue heterodox paths of practicing Islam. This practice is

²⁴³ I use "true heterodox" practices to recognize women's knowledge and practices as legitimate and authorizing discourses that are different from the scripturalist interpretations of Islam and also male-dominated mosques.

²⁴⁴ I consider current religious rituals as historical processes of continuity, discontinuity, and transformation rather than "religious renewal" (see Mahmood, 2005; Peshkova, 2009).

viewed by modernists²⁴⁵ as traditionalist, emphasising deviations from a true and correct Islam. Traditional Islam²⁴⁶ as a form of knowledge incorporates pre-Islamic religions such as Zoroastrism (Navruz), shamanism, animism, worship of saints, visiting shrines, *mazars*, and different healing practices. Traditional practices of carrying out *mavluds* are based on chanting, and recitation of poems or religious texts by the participants of the gathering; these are Sufi practices. Some of the healing practices based on shamanism, witchcraft, and animism are saturated with mysticism. Moreover, these ritual processes create meaning and legitimise true Muslim practices²⁴⁷ and notions of Muslim selfhood that enable women in Ok Yul to deal with trauma, injustice, and oppression.

Chapter overview

The first section of this chapter describes the current government's position to Islam and women's responses in developing their own discursive contested knowledge of religion. The second section describes healing practices in Uzbekistan and gives an example of my encounter with a healer, Zulfiya opa. The third section examines the *mavlud* ceremony and the production of situated knowledges of the

²⁴⁵ I refer to graduates of Islamic universities and some *otins* as “modernists” who believe that Islamic practices should be purified. For example, they call for banning *mavlud* and healing practices, and stress the practice of scripturalist interpretations of Islam. They advocate doing *namaz* to pursue a spiritual quest and protection from *jinns* (evil spirits) and attending *dars* (religious classes held by *otins* at homes) to gain Islamic knowledge. Similar to the Salafist movement in Saudi Arabia, they think everything beyond original Islam is *bid'ah* [Ar.], i.e. innovation. I consider the modernists' agenda to be following the early 20th century *Jadids*' line of modernization thought; *Jadids* were calling for purifying Islam and getting rid of local traditions and stressing education.

In the Muslim world, the use of modern and traditional is diverse. The Salafist movement calls for purifying Islam in the Saudi Arabia and returning to the original traditions. They call their own version of Islam the traditional version, and everything else is *bid'ah* – innovation – and hence wrong.

Another use of traditionalist emphasizes following the traditions of the *hadith* and the example of the Prophet, and refers to the practices of clergy who associate themselves with the Hanafi school of interpretation, rather than the Salafist thought that is related to the Shafi school (Khalid, 2007).

²⁴⁶ I refer to “traditional” Islam as local practices people carry out which are considered heterodox interpretations of Islam.

²⁴⁷ I reflect the discourse that Muslims in Ok Yul use to talk about religious practices.

otins, women who attended the event, and me. The next section analyzes *ihson*, Bibi Seshanba, and Mushkul Kushod, and is followed by the conclusion.

The points in this chapter will be based on three theoretical notions about rituals. First, feminist rituals are the basis of power, vision, and solidarity expressed symbolically in equal choice and pay, and women's entrepreneurial activities. Durable change in the status of women is achieved through the simultaneous alterations in symbols and context and moving away from the old to the new (Turner, 1982) type of human relationship, from the relationship of domination to a new paradigm of relationship based on partnership. Second, rituals are strategic acts where a new sacred space, different from the profane, transforms the human being's powers (Bell, 1992; Tursunova, 2008b). Third, feminist²⁴⁸ rituals also transform patriarchy, change women's view on injustices, affirm their identities and transform relationship and the ways women act in this world (Schirch, 2005).

Government Agendas, Islam, and Women in Ok Yul

The regime of the 1990s disapproves of local religious practices which they consider heterodox, not following scripturalist interpretations of Islam. Following the order of the government, the local Women's Committee in Ok Yul suppressed religious rituals. Several funeral ceremonies, such as gatherings taking place three days, eight days, twenty days (when *osh* is served), and forty days after the death, were banned. Only *iftorlik* (a meal after the evening prayer) was allowed to be carried out in a limited family circle.

The ban on these ceremonies was justified by the non-observance of these religious practices in *Arabston* (Saudi Arabia) that consequently led to the purification

²⁴⁸ I suggest that not all rituals are feminist. The findings of this study show women may reproduce inequality in rituals.

of Islam from the orthodox perspective.²⁴⁹ In Ok Yul, Women's Committees criticized heterodox scripturalist interpretations²⁵⁰ of Islam that were carried out by *otins* and their students as well as by local healers. *Otins* and local healers possess symbolic capital in terms of knowledge and collective practices that reorganize societies, heal individuals and communities, and provide shared avenues for hope and change. The dispute over what constitutes true Muslim beliefs, rituals and practices, and, consequently, a cultural Muslim identity exploits ambivalence about the "Islamic or Muslim way of life" that was debated in the environment of socio-economic and community restructuring (see chapters 5 and 6).

The government of Uzbekistan supports the Hanafi version of Islam and provides education in *madrassas*²⁵¹ according to the teaching of Islam and the orthodoxies of the Hanafi jurisprudence.²⁵² There are government approved publications (books, cassettes) available to the public in bazaars which provide basic knowledge about Islam and the *hadith*. The mosques are co-opted and controlled by the government and *imams* comply with state regulations. Men who attend mosques fear political and religious opposition.

At the beginning of 1990s, the government constructed lots of mosques without considering physical space for women. Spatial segregation constrains women's choices to participate in religious activities and worship but also allows them not to be subject to state persecution or be indoctrinated by *imam's* interpretation of Islam. Spatial segregation constrains and at the same time enables

²⁴⁹ Interview with the representative of the local Women's Committee.

²⁵⁰ A heterodox scripturalist interpretation is a discussion of the Qur'an or other religious scripture followed by a commentary that departs from the beliefs about that scripture and that are usually considered deviant from "pure" Islam by state and male religious authorities.

²⁵¹ *Madrassa* [Uz.] is a Muslim religious school.

²⁵² Babadjanov (2004) specifies that Hanafi jurisprudence provides a theological basis for local religious practices in Uzbekistan, but the religious practices are heterogeneous and contested. The Hanafi jurists do not prohibit and/or recommend women to attend the mosques. I suggest that in spite of government's efforts to follow the Hanafi version of Islam, people in Uzbekistan ambivalently pursue their own path to understanding, interpreting, and practicing Islam.

individual action. Women successfully negotiate traditionally male spaces and in some situations appropriate them and create “new” female Islamic spaces that at times resist classical patriarchy (Ask & Tjomsland, 1998). Women in Ok Yul do not resist spatial segregation, but rather recreate their own spatially enabling domestic places of religious observance where their agency is expressed in transforming profane place to sacred space. Women explained that they do not go to mosques because they consider that performing *namaz* allows them to keep the home as a sacred space. Other reasons of not attending mosque relate to the household chores, child rearing duties, and the mosques’ small physical space designed for men only with no space for women.

Spiritual Power: Healing Relations, Healing Communities

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, people experienced socio-economic distresses in terms of inflation, economic shock, job loss, and the resulting emotions of anger, frustration, and loss of hope. On one hand, the Soviet paternalistic system guaranteed employment by providing jobs to graduates of colleges and universities. On the other hand, the centralized top-down Soviet system provided equal pay disregarding the quality of work, and developed passive attitudes towards better quality production, innovation, and marketing knowledge and skills.

The adaptation to a new market economic reality was stressful and traumatic for the majority of the population. Some continued their jobs in the public sector and undertook informal activities to earn cash. Men undertook additional work as drivers, construction and agricultural workers in addition to self-subsistence farming and household repairing. Women pursued trade in bazaars, tailoring, baking, housecleaning, and agricultural work in addition to their subsistence farming, trade, unpaid housekeeping and child-rearing responsibilities at home. The people of Ok Yul felt that during the 18 years following Independence the socio-economic tension

decreased as people developed strategies, knowledge, and skills in carrying out livelihood activities. If at the beginning of the 1990s people were striving to survive and meet their basic needs, nowadays they were striving to accumulate resources and power in families.

What was evident in Uzbekistan during the 1990s was that both women and men experienced high tension within families due to unemployment, their unmet desire to own a house and land, and/or their longing to improve living conditions and consequently gain a better status in the *mahalla*. In the majority of cases women in Ok Yul do not usually approach the Women's Committee, but resort to healers not only to deal with distress or suffering, but also to transform conflicts in the family, work, community, or other social structures. The healers exercise agency by empowering communities to speak to pain, distress, suffering, domination, and marginalisation, and to develop plans of action to address the issues through their healers' divine power from supernatural forces where God has an ultimate power to be the judge.

Healing communities: Divine Power and Knowledge

I met Zulfiya opa when I traveled to Tashkent city to visit my aunt, Hakima *hola*.²⁵³ Because I was still single²⁵⁴ Hakima *hola* suggested to me to meet a healer who lives in her neighbourhood. My skepticism of seeing another healer was easily removed when I saw a tall, energetic woman with a light spirit quickly entering the door. I smiled and greeted her and we found out that we have the same name.

Zulfiya opa opened a towel that was wrapped around two sticks and a big knife. She put two sticks on her right side and a knife just in front of her. She asked my aunt to bring soap, sugar cubes, and water for me. She also asked my aunt's

²⁵³ *Hola* [Uz.] is an aunt.

²⁵⁴ Being single after the age of 25 is considered a problem for women in Uzbekistan. Many young women or their mothers need spiritual help and go to the *otin* to address the problem of singleness.

granddaughter Ainisa to remove a towel covering watermelon, grapes, and the rest of the food on the table so that she could bless the food.

She looked at me and said that something is stuck in my throat. She asked me if I feel it. I answered, no. My nose had been running for a few days either because I caught a cold or because of my allergies. I thought that it was not my throat but my running nose that did not let me breathe.

She looked at me again and said that inside of you there is a knot. Zulfiya continued: “It is so dark inside of you and even if you switch on the light, you cannot see it.” She repeated this statements several times. Her words immediately reminded me of what one *domla* I visited earlier told me: that my heart is covered by blood. Zulfiya opa articulated that “my head is not my head.” I felt that my calamity reached its peak with all controversial feelings tied in one knot: feeling upset, surprised, and curious.

Zulfiya opa was sitting in a chair and looked at my head. The healer went into a trance-like state, fainting and then coming into consciousness sporadically and slowly. I looked at her and smiled. I did not know if I should trust her or not. She took her knife and started touching my skin as if cutting with her knife my head, neck, stomach, legs, and even feet where *issik sovuk*²⁵⁵ was located.²⁵⁶ Afterwards Zulfiya

²⁵⁵ *Issik-sovuk* [Uz.] is cold and hot, meaning cursing and bewitching.

²⁵⁶ Nalivkin (1886) reports that women sought spiritual assistance from female religious practitioners who knew Islamic law and rarely from *mullahs*. Women usually requested two spells: *issikma* (Uz., heat and warm up) and *sovukma* (cool down). The community leaders viewed female religious practitioners with suspicion because they could curse their husbands. Sometimes women asked *mullahs* to cast the *issikma* spell when women wanted their husbands to be sexually active. The *mullah* spoke to the food, bread, apricots, and other items a woman brought to him and asked that the husband's feelings warm up. When the *mullah* finished his reading, the woman took the food and other things home and fed them to her husband who did not know that the spell was cast on these items.

The opposite of the *issikma* is the *sovukma*. In cases when a wife thought that her husband has an affection for another wife, or a mother-in-law is jealous of her son's affection to his wife, women resorted to *mullahs* to cool men down. Men who became insane were considered to be the victims of the malicious spells (Nalivkin, 1886).

opa read several *suras*²⁵⁷ while blowing her breath all over. She asked spirit angels to start cleaning the house from left to right. At the same time, she waived a *tasbih*²⁵⁸ in her hands from left to right.

Zulfiya opa worked in the Soviet system for 20 years as a salesperson in a children's shop, later for two or three years in an embroidery shop, and for 17 years as an accountant and cashier. She recounts how her initiatory illness led her to receive *potaha* from another healer and later become a healer.²⁵⁹ She acquired traditional knowledge through the following moments: sickness, identification by a healer who indicates her abilities and knowledge which are transmitted through her family member, and the blessing given by a practicing healer:

I became a healer when I was 40 years old. When I was 40 I got sick each day for fifteen days. Each day for fifteen days I am sick. My father-in-law, who has since passed away, brought a healer. After the healer performed a ceremony, I was cured. I was cured by her reading the Qur'an over me.

²⁵⁷ *Suras* are the chapters from the Qur'an.

²⁵⁸ *Tasbih* [Uz.] is prayer beads.

²⁵⁹ Stories like that of Zulfiya opa becoming ill at the age of 40 and then having dreams that instruct a person to become a healer are widespread, and thus widely accepted as legitimate and real in Central Asia. The moments of sickness, dreams, and healing constitute the process of becoming a healer through interpretation of the dream encounters with spirit agents and experience at the individual psychological level. The call to serve as a healer comes in a dream when the chosen person was given one of the items used by shamans (tambourine or whip). If those called do not accept the call, they will become sick. Those who accept a call visit a saint's tomb to receive a blessing, often through a dream (Snesarev, 2003).

Basilov (1989) describes the sickness of a shaman woman by the name of Momohal and her encounters in dreams with relatives and also the purchase of a whip in her dream. The fortune teller told Momohal to take a whip otherwise she would become blind. Momohal bought a whip for 15 *roubles* from an *ishan* (religious male leader) as the dream instructed her. When she started to prepare for a ritual feast, Momohal saw a goat in her dream that she purchased for 25 *roubles*. The fortune teller advised her to buy a goat for a feast and also ask an *ishan* to bless the whip. The *ishan* gave his blessing by spitting on the whip. Momohal's grandfather was a shaman who enabled her to pursue her healing path.

Snesarev (1974, 2003) and Bikzhanova (1974) describe shamanist practices in the Khorezm region in Uzbekistan in the 1950s. They tell about animistic beliefs related to such spirits as *paris* and *jinn*s which entered into relationships with people and forced them to become shamans. *Jinn*s are malicious beings who can harm people who encounter them. *Jinn*s can be found in uninhabited villages, houses, and mosques, cemeteries, in donkeys' or horses' manure, or in ashes. *Paris* can both help and harm people. People who were called by a *pari* to become shamans were addressed as *parikhon* or *folbin* in Khorezm and *bakshi* among the Kyrgyz (Moldobaev, 2001) and Kazakhs. Bikzhanova (1974) indicates that the *pari* appeared to men in the image of a beautiful woman, and to women as a young handsome man. Shamans are subordinated to *paris* and other spirits and call them to cure a sick person to remove hostile spirits. Basilov (1992) mentions that some religious authorities including some imams considered shaman's healing practices contradictory to the teachings of Islam.

One day I started looking for a healer. We did not have a healer in our *mahalla*. I found one. There is a street, *Izvestiya*, near the city hospital. It is an old street. It exists now.

I found one old woman. I found that woman and she was reading. She told me that I should accept the call to becoming a healer. Why should I accept this call for no reason? I thought. I was 35 at that time. She said, not now but at the age of 39. I told her that that I will not become a healer for no reason. Why should I take [*this role*] if there is no one from my mother's side, father's side, and parents-in-law's side [*who was a healer*]?

The healer asked: "Who is this woman standing behind you in a white scarf and a white dress? She has an oval face. She is looking at you and smiling." Zulfiya opa replied: "She is my mother's grandmother's mother-in-law. The relative gave a name to me, Zulfiya."

Zulfiya opa recounts how her maternal great-grandmother practiced the traditional knowledge of healing, *dam solish*, and *kina solish*.²⁶⁰ She healed people who were sick or in distress and even persons who possessed *shaitonlar*, a devil spirit. She also massaged muscles that were pulled. She read and all their knots were untied. Sick people who had seizures were cured after her healing practice. Zulfiya opa cured many people, combining healing and medical knowledge. Zulfiya opa inherited her healing abilities and knowledge through her blood relations that were transmitted to her from the two previous generations. Zulfiya opa said how in her childhood she cured by massaging her five brothers who fell down and had injuries.

At the age of 39 Zulfiya opa became ill again and started having hiccoughs everywhere, even in public space. She described how a Russian woman was disgusted by her hiccoughs on a tram and said to her, "You are badly brought-up. You are a rascal. It would have been better if you farted." Zulfiya opa's hiccoughs stopped abruptly when she received *potaha* from an *otin*. It happened when she brought her daughter to a 90- year-old *otin* because that daughter's children fell down often.

While the *otin* was performing a healing ritual for her daughter, Zulfiya opa was constantly hiccoughing. The *otin* kept telling Zulfiya opa that there is something

²⁶⁰ *Dam solish* and *kina solish* [Uz.] is reading and purification.

wrong with her. After finishing her healing of Zulfiya opa's daughter, she asked Zulfiya opa to sit next to her.

The *otin* asked Zulfiya opa to toss coins. The *otin* put tea and sugar in front of Zulfiya opa who brought them. She summoned the spirits²⁶¹ and put two whips and a knife on the table to whip and cut the pain. At the end of the initiation ritual, the *otin* gave *potaha* to Zulfiya opa that enables the healed to stop hiccoughing at that time and place. Now Zulfiya opa hiccoughs only in cases when someone is cursed and has the evil eye (*ko'z bor*).²⁶²

Zulfiya opa's knowledge and the spiritual power of her healing derives from Allah and following Allah *yo'lida*,²⁶³ by living in a right religious manner: performing *namaz* five times a day, paying *zakat*, and doing volunteer work. Like many healers in Central Asia, Zulfiya opa identifies herself as a slave of Allah and distances herself from *bakhsi* or *folbin* who can be found in Samarkand. Healers like Zulfiya regard *bakhsi* or *folbin* as working with *jinn* to harm people, and some people regard these practices as illegitimate according to the Islamic belief. Working with devil spirits contravenes work in the service to Allah, and telling fortunes to people as *bakshi* or *folbin* do, contradicts the idea that Allah is the one who knows.²⁶⁴ Zulfiya opa practices her *halol* life and stresses that she does not ask patients to pay a particular amount for the service, but receives what patients can afford to pay in cash or in

²⁶¹ The healers summon spirits by having an imaginary encounter with spirits which comprises a specific mode of access to divine knowledge and power through which individuals authorize their notions of Muslim self-identity (Rasanaygam, 2006).

²⁶² *Ko'z* [Uz.] means that someone cast the spell on another person to wish poor health, sickness, failure, and other misfortunes.

²⁶³ Allah *yo'lida* [Uz.] is in the path of Allah.

²⁶⁴ According to the Qur'an *jinn*s are one of the three types of spiritual beings created by God, in addition to humans and angels (See *sura* Al-Jinn, *sura* An-Nas). The Qur'an does not regard *jinn*s as necessarily always bad, but they are spirits which can possess people and shape their actions. However, people in Uzbekistan with whom I spoke associate *jinn*s with sickness, dirt, and pollution. People think that mental problems are caused by the work of the *jinn*.

kind.²⁶⁵ During the healing process, she invokes her Muslim saints such as *otakhonlar*,²⁶⁶ and *onakhonlar*²⁶⁷ sent by Allah to help her identify the distressed and suffering, clean and purify the ill body and space, and develop a healing action Zulfiya opa should undertake.²⁶⁸ Unlike other healers, Zulfiya opa refers to 41 *jon parilar*,²⁶⁹ including water and bird *parilar*; these ideas relate to the remnants of shamanism that existed also in pre-Soviet and Soviet times. Thus, the healer's multiple identities of being a Muslim and a shaman transcend in connecting the real world of existence with different spirit helpers.

The healer uses different ceremonial healing methods to cure people. She reads the Qur'an over her patients, children, men, and women who are sick when they attend or are absent during the healing ceremony. Zulfiya opa puts patients' clothes on her small table (for example, T-shirt, underwear), along with food (for example, tea, sugar, candies, water in jars or bottles), the traditional herb *isiriq*, and yogurt. She also has family pictures of patients over which she reads. Patients leave these items for the healer so that Zulfiya opa can read over them several times to ensure necessary change.

²⁶⁵ For example, milk and yogurt that is homemade.

²⁶⁶ *Otakhonlar* [Uz.] are fathers.

²⁶⁷ *Onakhonlar* [Uz.] are mothers.

²⁶⁸ I met healers who refer to ancestral spirits sent by Allah as *otakhonlar* and *onakhonlar*. I argue that when healers distinguish themselves from *bakshis* or *folbins* and call upon *otakhonlar* and *onakhonlar* instead of *jimns*, they claim their own interpretation as legitimate in determining their Muslim selfhood in the context when Islam re-emerged in post-communist space. These ancestral spirits appeared in the post-Soviet period in contrast to healers of Soviet times who were called *paris*, having both malevolent and benevolent attitude to people (Snesarev, 2003). Some healers refers to *azizlar* and *otakhonlar* in arguing how healers and their clients change the idea of Muslim selfhood (Rasanyagam, 2006). I suggest that some healers relate to both *paris* and ancestral spirits such *otakhonlar* and *onakhonlar* to contest the notion of Muslim selfhood and authorize their integrative framework of what constitutes a good Muslim.

²⁶⁹ *Pari* [Uz.] are supernatural beings that can harm and cure people (Snesarev, G.P., 1973). *Jon* [Uz.] is dear, loved.

The healer uses bio-medicinal knowledge²⁷⁰ which she discovered around the time she became an accountant. She got hot and had to lie down on the cool floor or stand against the cool walls to cool down in order to balance her biological energy. These episodes led her to discover the path of healing she uses.

Cleansing is one way she deals with patients who have physical and psychological distress. One male patient had lots of problems in his stomach, which he attributed to curses. He went from one hospital to another and none of the doctors could cure him. Zulfiya opa tests the health of a patient by putting her feet on the patient's feet. She diagnosed his health as weak because the patient felt the healer's warmth going from one foot to another foot. Zulfiya opa read *suras* from the Qur'an over water and yogurt and other items on the table. The patient drank two jars of yogurt (six litres in total) mixed with water in one day and vomited. He was cleansed and the vomiting expelled all witches. Zulfiya opa engages her spirit helpers and Muslim saints to solve personal and interpersonal conflicts.

In the course of my healing and calling upon her spirit helpers Zulfiya opa was cutting my back, shoulders, and feet with a knife, saying:

I am cutting all knots, junctures. I am cutting, cutting, cutting. I am cutting all bewitching. Take them to the running water. You are the only one [*addressing Allah*]. You are the Almighty one.

[*She continues to invoke spirits to help her clean and says*]: Open the road. Open the junctures. Wash and remove everything. Remove the burden from her shoulders. Take the entire burden from her shoulders. Wash inside all that bewitches. I cut everything. Prepare for cleaning. She will drink yogurt and all the bewitching will be gone.

Zulfiya opa asked me to bring yogurt, sugar, tea, white thread, water, and flour. She read *suras* seven times to bless these items. She put a little bit of flour into a piece of paper. She folded white thread seven times and put it into the flour rolled

²⁷⁰ The healers in Uzbekistan summon the imagery and cosmologies which consist of an eclectic combination of Islamic cosmology and practice, ideas from modern age healing, such as bio-energy and biomedical knowledge (Rasanyagam, 2006).

into the piece of paper. She explained that flour symbolises happiness; thread the road; and water cleanliness and purity. She asked me to request Allah to help me to fulfill my wishes and to throw rolled flour and thread into a river while facing the water.

While scripturalist interpretations of Islam are quite common in Uzbekistan, the healers carry out authorising processes to question religion, norms, practices, and identities. Zulfiya opa empowers women to pursue their self-interest and authorizes the legitimacy of breaking up a relationship if things have not worked out. She explains: “If you have a child, then you may live well after it. If things do not go well, you can say *idi k jerty. Znajit ti ne nujen*.²⁷¹ The most important thing is that you have a child.” By authorizing her emancipatory discourse, Zulfiya opa contradicts a widespread dominant view the society and the Women’s Committee in *mahallas* to keep the marriage cohesive. On the other hand, the healer stresses the importance of the status and identity of being married and having a son. In the course of my conversation with her when I stated that daughters also are providers and sometimes even the sole providers, she suggested it is good to have well brought-up, educated children of both genders. Hence, a healer may create new authorising knowledge and gender discourses of different Muslim behaviour, practices, and norms, and, consequently, identity which she disseminates among community members.

She started cutting a photo of a man, Sunnat, with a knife, to make the wandering husband faithful to his wife, Jamilya. Neither Sunnat nor Jamilya was in the room. The healer showed me a picture of a happy looking young couple, a woman dressed in a white European dress and a young man in a black suit with a white shirt. Zulfiya opa uses her cultural power and knowledge and symbolic power which comes

²⁷¹ *Idi k jerty. Znajit ti ne nujen* [Russ.] means go to hell. I do not need you.

through her power of generating utterances and making her patients transform their worldviews and actions.

Zulfiya opa's utterances are aimed to stop Sunnat from cheating on his wife. The healer's words become effective when she starts reciting *suras* from the Qur'an and by cutting him on the picture to gain control over him. She cursed Sunnat's sexuality by whipping his underwear with her knife, saying "let his stuff not work." Zulfiya opa interacts directly with Sunnat even though he is not present, and tells him to stop cheating on his wife.

With this in mind, the healer uses shaman's methods through symbolic resources such as lizards to ensure the change of man's behaviour towards loyalty and benevolence. She explains: "if you put a lizard inside the *ko'rpacha* where he sleeps, his cheating on his wife will end. I will read over him so that women he walks with will see him as ugly as a lizard. His wife is beautiful and they have a daughter. Sunnat says that he does not want to live with them. He goes to the discothèque and comes back home at three or four o'clock. He is all *obsassiniy*²⁷² over."

Zulfiya opa continues healing, cutting Sunnat in the picture, and insists that he should listen to his wife and respect his parents. The symbolic power of the *otin* is defined by the relationship between the *otin* who exercises power and this unfaithful man and his wife who follows and grants power to the healer. This implies that the symbolic power does not exist in the symbolic system as illocutionary force but rather is negotiated between the agents and receivers. What produces the power of healer's words and actions, is as Bourdieu (1991) puts it, "the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them" (p. 170).

²⁷² *Obsassiniy* [Russ.] means sucked by kisses.

Healers establish their legitimacy through their successful healing practices which are supported by the testimony of women who visit healers. Zulfiya opa sometimes sees persons individually but she also convenes groups that allow people to hear others' dilemmas and her successful therapeutic action. These healing circles and people's conversation explain how Zulfiya opa's reputation is spread, and why people in the community believe that her words and practices are successful.

Zulfiya opa continues her healing ceremony by cutting another man on the picture with his wife. Zulfiya opa instructs this man, Gafur, to listen to his wife, Karima. Gafur and Karima are not in the room yet Zulfiya opa addresses Gafur directly, calling for change in his belief system and behaviour that cause conflict.

Karima works as a waitress in a chicken barbeque cafeteria, and also cleans the place where she was cursed by her colleague, a Tatar woman. The healer calls upon spirits and says: "Those who knotted her happiness cut all her knots. Wash everything. I am cutting everything. I cut everything. Be fast. Clean the leftovers. When she drinks yogurt all the leftovers will be cleaned. Prepare for cleaning." Zulfiya opa started reading *suras* again and calling upon Allah to help: "You are the master. I am the slave. I am asking. Do not leave my request unanswered. Wash everything."

She continued cutting Gafur on this picture with a knife by asserting he should respect and to listen to Karima. Zulfiya opa explains that Gafur likes Russians and Tatars but is rude to Uzbeks and Tajiks. The healer deals with multilayered identity politics, the attitudes and assumptions of the superiority of Russian and Tatar that were brought by colonizers, attitudes that she tries to change through her connection to Muslim saints and spirit helpers.

She continued reading *suras* again. Afterwards, she invokes spirits to help:

Wash women and men on these pictures [*She mentions the names of all people in the pictures*]. Wash everybody in these pictures into water in the river. Gafur should listen to Karima. Whatever she says, he should listen to her. [*Zulfiya opa was holding tasbih that were moving into a direction she said with the help of spirit helpers*].

Family conflicts and struggles for power to own a house manifest often between household members. Zulfiya pointed to the sand in a small plastic sack that could fit into one hand. Occasions when people use sand to curse someone are quite common. People usually put sand in front of or inside of someone's house. The healer explained that this sand was brought by Halima opa whose two *kelins*, Gulchehra and Fazilyat, had been harming her. Halima opa found this sand on the carpet in her room.

As a mediator of this conflict through her spiritual power, Zulfiya opa strongly relies on public opinion in the *mahalla* and informal conversations. She said that a few years ago Gulchehra was a good wife and Fazilyat was bad. Zulfiya opa is confused as to what to think now in mapping the behaviour, power, styles, and tactics in this conflict. Marip, the husband of Gulchehra, kicked his wife and their five children out of the house. Fazilyat is staying with the widowed Halima opa, who lives in the house that was built before by her husband. The struggle for space between two daughters-in-law intensified when Halima opa's husband passed away. The conflict reflects the division of space and making spatial boundaries between two brothers. Halima opa registered the property in her name and divided the *hovli* into two parts by building a wall with a door. Halima opa lives with her older son and his family, with whom she no longer eats; she mostly cooks for herself in a kitchen in her house.

Zulfiya opa exercises her symbolic power, authority, and responsibility to bring peace to the families outside the realm of healing practices. The healer tells how once she was sitting in a shop run by her neighbour. Fazilyat came and did not greet her. When Zulfiya opa asks why she did not greet her, Fazilyat replied that she did not

recognize Zulfiya opa. Zulfiya opa was asking Fazilyat why she stopped visiting her to seek spiritual help. The healer assumes that Fazilyat avoids her because she started fighting directly against her mother-in-law by putting sand into her in-laws' room. Perhaps Fazilyat does not want to submit to the rules and social control of the healer to achieve her personal goal of a house without in-laws.

Healers and their practices transform norms of social behaviour in families and communities as well as dealing with social issues such as unemployment. Zulfiya opa showed me a picture of a man and a woman in their 40s. The man is unemployed. His stepmother brought lump sugar, candies, and tea to receive blessing and healing through these objects. The healer reads *suras* over these objects so that the therapeutic action of her utterance will instil hope and faith with the unemployed man.

Why is our society in such turmoil? Why, I asked Zulfiya opa. Zulfiya opa said that people stopped thinking about having harmony in the family. To my question why people curse or bewitch others a lot, the healer replied:

In the book it is written that there will be a *kiemat*²⁷³ when dead people will become alive and alive people will die. The earth will disappear. The century will be over. The new life will start and a new century will begin. The dead people will be alive. The people who cursed you or Halima opa or others will die early. The people who believe, will read it [*read the Qur'an and recite prayers*] and do *kaitaruv* [*repent*], reading to protect themselves. The people who do not believe die with cursing and bewitchment. Now even hospitals tell patients to go home and read in the old way. They cannot cure them. They say that doctors could not cure patients. They should read themselves. They start understanding that reading is necessary. People become enemies against each other because Allah put in their thought and soul to do these things. These people will go to *dozoh*.²⁷⁴

The healer pointed to a picture of a woman with a child of about two years old whom she was holding in her arms. This woman committed a sin when she bewitched someone's house and because of that her child died.

²⁷³ *Kiemat* [Uz.] is a judgment day.

²⁷⁴ *Dozoh* [Uz.] is hell.

Zulfiya opa started reading the *Ya Sin sura* seven times over the objects and me because I came to heal. The spiritual power is believed to enforce new attitudes and changes in the behaviour of the male wrong-doers and challenges patriarchy through animistic images of malevolent women as snakes and frogs. This power challenges male dominance and the deeply rooted behaviour of some men sometimes passed from one generation to the next generation. Men are not aware of their wives' visits to the healer but men certainly fear the power of healers and also respect their authority. Spiritual power with social control over proper moral behaviour, control over the sexuality of men, and respect to family members may set up a stage for peace, social justice and women's rights at the micro level. Men's behaviour may not always change but at least the healing power and blessings help women to feel that their stress is relieved when they tell the healer about their problems; women regain their strength, hope, voice and agency in the sense of pursuing respect and equality in their relationships. Hence, I argue that a local healer's knowledge, power, and authority provides a new impetus towards values and human rights paradigm shift of power relationship and produces new space for power renegotiation, inclusion, and communication:

Let these objects absorb the treasures' light [*three times*]. Let his cheating stop. When he goes to the beaches, let women look like snakes [*three times*]. Let women look like snakes. Let women look like snakes. Oh, Allah. You see this sand [*She pointed sand to me*].

Bismilahi Rahmoni Rahim. Let Mastura husband's work go well. Let all junctures and curses open. Let him follow the work. Let him follow the work. Let him follow the work. Let him have lots of work. Let his future be full of treasure things. Let his front be full of treasure. Let him work day and night. I will read the *Ya Sin sura*. You are the almighty one. You are the only one who can help.

Let the light go into these objects [*three times*]. When he goes to beaches, let his stuff not work [*she was beating with a whip his underwear*]. Let women look like frogs.

You are the only one who is almighty. Let the light go into them. Let them be respectful to his parents. After he drinks tea and eat sweets, he should change.

Besides the emphasis on healing and restoring relations, a healer calls down punishment for people who cause and inflict harm on others. She is carrying out a curse by saying that the punished will have pimples, spots on their faces, sickness, or even death as forms of restitution.²⁷⁵ Zulfiya opa explains: “He gives punishment himself. I do not do anything. Some persons come and say that they have stomatitis, but they do not know that this is because of cursing they did to someone. Allah knows who is right and who is wrong. He should give a verdict himself.”

The healer uses expert knowledge and legitimate authority, and appeals to the ultimate authority of Allah to design and enforce punishment. The punishment is an enactment of proper moral behaviour that comes from the Islamic notion of a *halol* life. Thus healing practices that come from Islam and shamanism set up a social order and behaviour that renews peace in Muslim communities. The healer continued her reading:

Let those who wanted to curse, let them get sick. Let them lie down [*three times*]. Oh, Allah. [*She started reciting verses of the Quran. She blew on the objects*]. She continued reciting the Quran. Let them lie down. Let the wounds (pimples) occupy all face, occupy, occupy, occupy all face. Let them appear everywhere. Let nothing healthy be left. She started reciting the Quran again.

Let everyone have a good life. Let people, husbands and wives respect each other [*three times*]. Let what they find bring them health, wealth, luck. My friend Lobar, let a thing looking like a needle become big. Let them earn millions, billions thanks to Allah. Let them find endlessly. Let their 10 *so'm* become a million, a billion. Let children be respectful to each other. Let children rely on each other. Let Allah give punishment to those who are cursing. You decide what to do. Let them lie down. Give such a punishment that they will lie down. Give such a bad punishment. She started reciting the Quran again.

I read *Ya Sin sura* seven times. Let all left over bundles, junctures open and go away. Let Sunnat go to work and come back home early. Let him respect his children, parents, and wife. Let Zulfiya meet a husband, like me. Let her meet a nice husband. Let her husband be rich, and let her be rich too. Amen. Let *nikoh*²⁷⁶ fall down from the sky and open the road of happiness. Let

²⁷⁵ Sometimes healers practice harmful sorcery to curse or bewitch people or objects. Zulfiya opa told that she stopped harmful sorcery because it contravened with Islamic norms and her identity of being a good Muslim.

²⁷⁶ *Nikoh* [Uz.] is a religious ceremony of marriage carried out by an *imam*.

her give birth to Hasan and Zuhra, or Fotma and Zuhra [*usually these names are given to twins*]. Let her children be healthy. Let children be respectful to their parents. Let her be happy. Whatever she wishes, let her wishes come true.

***Mavlud* – Contesting Knowledge Legitimacy and Authority**

Mavlud is one of the biggest and most significant of the all-female religious events practiced. It is an event to honour the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. It is usually conducted on the birthday of the Prophet, which is regarded to relate to the Twelfth Day of Rabbi-ul-avval in the lunar calendar and also the four following months. Middle-aged women and elder women who belong to the kin, community, or professional networks of the hostess and her family, attend *mavlud*. Younger women serve the guests during the ceremony and join the ceremony when the *otin*²⁷⁷ begins reciting the Qur'an. The *mavlud* usually starts at two or three o'clock in the afternoon and lasts two or three hours.

The process of carrying out *mavlud*, *ihson*, and other ceremonies may differ, but share central elements. The first stage is to smudge or purify the house with *isiriq* to sacralise the space and prepare it for recitation of the Qur'an. This is followed by the arrival of guests and *otin* – from 20 to 60 or more – before the ceremony begins. These middle-aged and older women usually cover their hair with *ro'mol*²⁷⁸ and wear shirts or traditional or modern dresses with long sleeves. *Otins* usually cover their head with a white scarf.

When they enter the *hovli*, women are greeted by the hostess and her close relatives standing in a row, after which they proceed in to the house. Women contribute food (*somsa*, traditional bread) and baked goods to the ceremony and sometimes may contribute money. Women take off their shoes, greet each woman

²⁷⁷ An *otin* is a religious woman who leads the ceremony.

²⁷⁸ *Ro'mol* [Uz.] is a square kerchief folded in the middle into a triangle shape. It covers the head, and is drawn to two sides behind the ears and tied at the back.

who arrived earlier by giving her a hug and moving around the rectangular table until they sit. Sometimes *otins* come a little bit later after all guests are together.

The third stage of the ceremony consists of socialisation and having a meal. The religious service begins after women have greeted each other and drunk tea with pastries, fruits, and sweets served by a young woman, who hands out plates that were arranged on a tray in even numbers.²⁷⁹

The fourth stage is comprised of the recitation of *suras* of the Qur'an and chanting them in Arabic (*tajwid*), telling *hadith*, and conveying *maslahats*,²⁸⁰ stories, and poems. The hostess of the event brings a tray with tea, *isiriq*, lump sugar, raisins, and perfume and puts it in front of *otin*. The *otin oyi* starts with invocation to Allah and talks about the five pillars of Islam and the life of the Prophet and his family. The ceremony is followed by the *salavat*²⁸¹ and *salam*²⁸² to the Prophet. The *otin* may decide to continue with *sura Al-Ihlas*²⁸³ which worships Allah as the most gracious, the most merciful, eternal, and absolute being. The recitation of the Qur'an is followed by *Ya Sin sura* and its explanation. Women may feel emotional and tear up during joint recitations with the *otin*, which is not typical for male *mavluds*.

In the fifth stage, the meal is continued by serving tea, sweets, and pastry. The sixth stage consists of the last prayer and blessing the hostess, people who passed away, and participants of the event and their family members. The seventh stage includes gift-giving to the *otin* and returning *tog'ora* with bread and food from the table that was blessed before departure of all guests. The last stage consists of

²⁷⁹ Even numbers are considered fortunate. For example, when guests bring bread, they always bring loaves of *non* [Uz.] in pairs.

²⁸⁰ *Maslahat* [Uz.] is an advice given through telling stories or life events.

²⁸¹ *Salavat* [Uz.] is worship. In Sufi rituals and the rituals led by an *otin*, *salavat* involves singing or chanting words all together. These words are in praise of Allah.

²⁸² *Salam* [Uz.] is a greeting.

²⁸³ *Sura Al-Ihlas* [Ar.] is The Purity of Faith.

cleaning the space – washing dishes and sweeping – done by the younger guests after the older guests leave.

I was attending Kamila opa's *mavlud*. She delivered the ceremony because of the successful construction of her house and her longing for the prosperous well-being of her children. The youngest son of the hostess of the event, Sobir aka, is engaged in selling fabric in one of the Tashkent bazaars. His wife takes care of three children and Kamila opa, and performs all the household work in two *hovlis*. Indeed, the trade activity helped him to buy a new piece of land (20 *sotka*) and build two separate houses at the edges of the land.

The improvement of economic activities was reflected in the new, atypical spatial division of the *hovli* and its boundaries and social relations amongst extended household members. He split this piece of land into two parts divided by a wall. One part was allocated to his mother and another to his family. His part was a combination of European and traditional style. He had a new modern automatic door for his garage, and furnished rooms with modern European style furniture, but the *hovli* remained in the traditional style with planted vegetables and fruits. Moreover, Sobir *aka* built a livestock stable in his mother's part of the *hovli* instead of his own, which certainly was not supported by women guests because of the smell.

Kamila opa went to *hajj* and became a *hojona*, a title granted to women who went to *hajj* and which gives them a special status in the community. She started veiling and performing religious ceremonies often with her three daughters and two sons. As a hostess of the *mavlud*, Kamila opa invited Marguba opa, a local *otin*, her nephew's mother, who has never been to Mecca and whose knowledge is locally obtained. This local *otin* attended a *beshek to'y* where she gave her blessing to the

hostess, and, hence, had substantial symbolic power in the eyes of her relatives and community members.

To respect her authority and maintain strong kinship ties, Kamila opa invited Marguba opa to hold the *mavlud* ceremony. If Kamila opa had not done so, the local *otin* would have felt excluded and insulted. In addition, the hostess also invited three *otins* who went to *hajj* several times to show her respect to Yulduz opa, Saida opa, and Muhlisa opa. Kamila opa met these *otins* when she went to *hajj*.

The ceremony was started by Marguba opa, an *otin*, who recited a couple of *suras* and told about the life of the Prophet. Her recitation was interrupted by the late arrival of three *otins* who are in their 60s, who energetically entered the room. All three of them were tall and two of them were slim. They were wearing traditional long-sleeved dresses and were veiled with white scarves.

They passed to the *ustolni to'raga*²⁸⁴ without the hostess's invitation to sit at the top. The attending Marguba opa remained sitting when the three charismatic, energetic women entered the room. The three new *otins* waved their hands indicating the audience nonverbally to continue sitting at the table. In spite of these nonverbal requests, women got up and greeted them. Because the women got up, I felt that the symbolic power shifted towards new *hajji* women. The *hajji otins* sat next to the local *otin* and asked her to continue the ceremony. The local *otin*, Marguba, lost her confidence and voice and could not hold the audience. Consequently, Marguba *otin's* symbolic power decreased. It was clear that *hajji otins* came with the purpose to

²⁸⁴ *Ustolni to'raga* [Uz.] is the top of the table located opposite to the entrance door in the room. In Central Asian/Turkic cultures *to'raga chiking* means to be seated at top of the table, in the place of honour. In this gathering, the hostess's in-laws sat on the left side of the table close to the top of the table, the place of honour. The hostess' sisters and other relatives sat in the middle and close to the bottom of the table on the left and right sides. Younger women like me sat at the bottom of the table. When the in-laws came, women shuffled and moved down to give a seat of honour to the guest. The meaning of space is inscribed to the importance of kin relationship and age.

sabotage the local *otin*, subvert her teaching, attract more followers, and consolidate symbolic power.

There was a moment when the tension in the air was felt. Marguba opa continued her *sura* but was immediately interrupted by one of the newly arrived *otins*, Yulduz opa. This *hajji otin* started questioning the knowledge of Marguba opa, who was reciting *suras*. In her defence, Marguba opa said that she had never gone to Mecca and did not have a chance to talk with Arab people who possess a “true knowledge of Islam.” This message has two meanings – one, face-saving for Marguba opa, but also an implied critique that her knowledge is from another people. However, in the perception of the *hajji otins*, Marguba opa’s human and symbolic capital was low. The other women felt awkward during the knowledge arguments of two *otins*, which revealed their power struggle. The power of the *otin* shifted towards the new *hajji otin*, Yulduz opa, who had a large repertoire of discursive knowledge at her hands: the knowledge of the Qur’an, *hadith* that she learnt from abroad, and the rhetorical skill to appeal to the minds and souls of the audience.

While this power contestation was going on, the hostess of the event, Kamila opa, sat quietly and did not intervene in the conflict between the two *otins*. It seemed that Kamila opa told the *hajji* women about the local *otin* and as such, plotted the whole scene of the sabotage of the *otin* by *hajji otins*, Yulduz opa, Saida opa, and Muhlisa opa. A woman sitting next to me whispered in my ear that the *hajji otin* has a big house, went to *hajj* seven times, and has a huge greenhouse with lemon trees. This woman told me that “she keeps her *kelins* strongly,” that is, she keeps them in order. It was clear that the *hajji otin* had enormous economic power which helped her to build her symbolic power as an *otin* with foreign knowledge of Islam. Apparently the three *hajji* women believed that Yulduz opa’s knowledge of Islam is true and pure and

thus legitimate, compared to the local *otin*. The *hajji* had different foreign training, and thus a potentially superior claim on knowledge, which she leveraged to enhance her own status at the expense of the other local *otin* in an unbalanced contest of authority. Marguba opa as *otin* tried to defend the legitimacy of her knowledge and her command of knowledge that could help her to attract some of the women who plan to host *mavluds* in the future. Hence, she lost some potential clientele and also social face. The *hajji* women, headed by Yulduz opa, a more outspoken leader-*otin*, silenced the local *otin*, Marguba opa.

The newly arrived *otin*, Yulduz opa, stole the holding of the ceremony and started with the *Ya Sin sura* and its explanation. One of the women asked a question: Whether or not it is appropriate to say “God”²⁸⁵ instead of “Allah,” as the newly arrived *otin* did. The participant of the ceremony was also claiming her knowledge which she obtained from her son who studied in Egypt and challenging the *otins*. Yulduz opa answered that there is no difference as Islam encompasses all religions. There was a moment of no interaction between the *otins* and the audience. The silence was broken by a woman who told Yulduz opa that I was an educated person who studied in Canada and was doing research. Yulduz opa asked me what I would like to hear from her. I reiterated the purpose of my being in the ceremony and my desire to learn about Islam.

Yulduz opa moved closer to the woman, a gesture which seemed to intrude on the boundaries of space between the listeners and her. Thus, this gesture also reinforced her power relations in communications and relations. She positioned herself in the *to’r*, the place of honour, again while we were sitting on the *ko’rpacha* on the floor. The *otin* encoded social hierarchy expressed in body language and

²⁸⁵ *Hudo* [Uz.] is Lord.

distance expressed in space and interaction between her and the participants. She sat on the sofa that was located against a wall (the left side of the room, opposite the entrance door to the room) with pictures of Kaaba hanging behind it. The sofa and pictures of Mecca or calligraphy of the *Ya Sin sura* hanging on the wall are new post-Soviet ideas in decorating homes, found in the place of honour in many houses.

The first poem written by the *otin* was about respecting elders who may have five days left to live in this world, and whose advice should be considered. The second poem describes a mother of Islam who worked hard, sacrificed her life for her children, and was patient in times of hardships to raise intelligent and decent children. The poem addresses a common problem in families, when children stop valuing their parents' sacrifice and hardships to ensure the new generation prospers. The *otin* recited the following poem:

<i>To'y qilaman deb, bel tukkan</i>	To conduct a wedding,
<i>Kelinga sarpo yiqqan</i>	She collected a <i>sarpo</i> ²⁸⁶ for a bride
<i>Kam ko 'stiga joninni teggan</i>	In times of hardships endures pain in her
<i>Joni temir onalar</i>	soul
	Mothers with iron soul

(See Figure 12. A Poem Dedicated to Mothers in Appendix)

I noticed an alteration of the women's mood; some women began weeping and crying. Yulduz opa immediately gained authority and legitimacy granted by the elder women. The religious practitioner stressed women's sacrifices for their children and adherence to Islam. However, her poem was promoting patriarchy and obedience to men by urging women never to diverge from their husbands' path and never to cease to feed them.

Women asked her to recite other poems dedicated to *kelins* perhaps to question her worldview subtly. Yulduz opa said that the *kelins* are busy in the kitchen. It was evident that Yulduz opa did not want the *kelins* to listen to her poem. The hostess of

²⁸⁶ *Sarpo* is the collection of gifts (clothes, trousseau items) given to the bride and groom.

the event called some young women who entered the room and sat next to me, at the bottom of the table. Yulduz opa called upon the women to listen to her because the women stopped paying attention to her and were talking to each other.

Yulduz *otin* started reciting another poem about how if the mother who loves her son goes around looking at potential brides and judges correctly, she will choose the right one for her son, the bride will behave exactly as she should, and everyone in the family will have peace.

<i>Yolg'izgina o'gli bor ayol</i>	The woman has only one son
<i>Shirin shirin so'zlab turasiz ayol</i>	The sweet sweet words you say
<i>Birgalikda bir gap aytaylik</i>	Let me say once
<i>Kelmasin malol</i>	Without hesitation
<i>Yana kelin tanlaganda also</i>	This time do not be mistaken when
<i>adashmasin</i>	you select a bride

(See the poem dedicated to the woman who selects a bride for her son in Appendix)

It is quite common in Central Asia for women to select brides for their sons. It can be argued that women play an important role in contracting marriages, creating alliances, maintaining the kinship system, and leading male initiation during the ceremony.²⁸⁷

I consider this a practice – where parents impose their choices of bride and groom on their children in order to strengthen or extend kinship ties and for the economic advantage of the family – that both is produced by and produces patriarchy. That is, this practice is one dynamic within the system of patriarchy. However, it is also common that young people choose partners and decide to marry. In this poem, the young men ask their mother to go to *sovchilik*²⁸⁸ to initiate the marriage.

As Yulduz opa was reciting this poem, many elder women resisted and questioned *otin's* power by talking to each other without listening to her. The *otin*

²⁸⁷ Diana Bell (1996) investigates the ritual *yilpinji* wherein aboriginal women in Australia take a lead in arranging marriages. Bell argues that the sexual politics such as dialogue between sexes and the interplay and exchange of power should be understood as a balance of power against male claims of control and authority. I join many young women's opinions that forced marriage is a top-driven approach to sexual politics which draws restricted ritual boundaries and rules exclusive for senior women's decision-making.

²⁸⁸ *Sovchilik* [Uz.] is expressing a wish to a bride's family to let their son marry their daughter.

asked the women to listen to her. The women did not like what the *otin* was saying and power shifted towards the participants. The *otin* stumbled once but got control of herself and continued:

<i>Bolangizni bor qilgan ham shu</i>	She is the one who can make your
<i>Yo'ki horu-zor qilgan ham shu</i>	child prosper
<i>kelin</i>	She can also make him poor
<i>Nozik, ammo buyuk kuchdir u</i>	She is fragile, but possess enormous
<i>Kelin tanlaganda hech</i>	power
<i>amardashmang</i>	Do not be mistaken when you select a
	bride

The negotiation of the content between the narrator and the listeners took place during the recitation and after the *otin* finished reciting her poem. The *otin* reinforced the power of men expressed in gender-biased language when saying “if she [*the kelin*] is good, you become a king” while she was addressing female audience. When the *otin* was saying that “If she is good, you become a king; If she is bad, you turn into dirt; If you have a blood pressure, you die;” the older woman said that she hopes that the *kelin* would be mindful. This message reinforced women’s subordination. Yulduz opa did not respond to the comment as the comment reinforced her patriarchal ideas and she continued her recitation.

When the religious practioner finished her poem, she said that she has good daughters-in-law. “Five daughters-in-law have different names. The most important thing is that they make their husbands happy.” One of the women in her 50s challenged the *otin* directly and said that “if you are good, daughters-in-law are good too.” This woman voices the idea that it would be easy to be a good daughter-in-law if one has a good mother-in-law, but leaving unstated, implied, that the opposite is also true: a bad mother-in-law makes it impossible for the *kelin* to be a good bride. Yulduz opa smiled and the audience slightly laughed. She replied: “The most important for me is if you [*addressing women in the audience*] do not make my sons upset.”

The *otin* does not really address the complaint; she deflects it by essentially denying that she (or others, by implication) can be mean or wrong. Moreover, she seems to indicate that it is the job of the bride to please her sons; as long as brides are correctly pleasing their husbands, she, the mother-in-law, will be kind to them. But in this audience, there are lots of women who have experienced conflict with their mothers-in-law. These women think that mothers-in-law oppressed them, and so the lack of peace in their household is not their fault, but the fault of older women who treated them badly. The *otin's* poem did not speak to women's experience in the past and disconnected them from the poem. The processes of narration allowed older women to voice their opinion and speak to their experience in discussing the poems. Thus the power was negotiated between the speaker and the audience.

The poet-*otin* is an agent of patriarchy who creates and reinforces subordination in communities through her discursive practices and her position of relative control in the social construction of meaning. According to her view, the harmony in the house is created by older women's correct choices of young women/brides. This implies that if there is lack of harmony, a woman, the mother-in-law, should be blamed because she exercised poor judgment in choosing a *kelin*. The lack of harmony in this poem does not come from oppression on the part of the mother-in-law, nor her son, who apparently is always the blameless darling of his mother, but rather is the result of the bad bride. The poem teaches young women to be sweet and nice and to always do what their husbands say and always do what their mothers-in-law tell them, and then the family will thrive and avoid ruin.

The poem reinforces patriarchal values. All women gatherings are typically dialogic. Even the local *otin* is seeking to offer solace and comfort to the women whereas *hajji otin* derives her satisfaction from her own sense of power and status

rather than genuine sense of empowerment to attack the intermediate level of agency related to fair distribution of resources and rules and deeper levels of structural relations of gender and class. This is a sign of internalized oppression where people act like colonizers and patriarchs, instructing and disciplining minds and bodies of young women.

The women did not ask Yulduz opa to recite any other poems to resist her oppressive messages. The religious practitioner started talking to one woman she knew. This woman came to the sofa, but sat on the *ko'rpacha* (lower, on the floor) while the Yulduz opa was sitting on the sofa, not giving up on her effort to assert her superiority and power which she inscribed in space. A participant of the ceremony was urged non-verbally to get up and give a seat to the woman who joined the *otin*.

At the end of the ceremony, the hostess brought trays with gifts which she gave first to all the *otins* sitting at the place of honour, and then to other relatives who were positioned according to their social rank, status, and strength of relationship to the hostess. Kamila opa went to see off the *hajji otins* and other guests who were leaving. The three *hajji otins* left in a Nexia car²⁸⁹ and the *otin* who stole the ceremony forgot her tray and had to come back.

Rituals are forms of narrative which gives understanding of women's situated knowledges and their position within the social strata of a society. Situated knowledge includes evidence of positioning of women's body in space, sitting in *to'r*, sofa, or *pas* at the bottom of the table, as well as verbal (laughter) and non-verbal indicators (silence, gestures, body postures, and dress code) that produce rich social knowledge of power games. The social context and stories told at women's rituals, "cutting knots" of patriarchy by questioning, gossiping, transforming and moving learning

²⁸⁹ Nexia car is a luxury car.

processes forward are the pathways of social construction of meaning to reclaim power, knowledge, and action.

Women's rituals are places of contesting and negotiating knowledges where women construct the meaning of women's Muslimhood and their position in a society. Women are knowers who critically produce knowledge about injustices and inequalities and are also influenced by new knowledge. The issues of domestic violence, migration, unemployment, marriage, divorce, child abuse are central in "cutting the knots" and examining power, privilege, and oppression that exist in the society. Hence, women's rituals are a place of mobilisation against patriarchy and empowerment in contrast to the Women's Committees and state structures which ban rituals and subvert the processes of bringing women's agenda forward to transform inequalities and inequities in a community.

***Ihson* – Transformative Peacebuilding**

Ihson is a religious ceremony where the Qur'an is recited by an *otin* who blesses the hostess and her family members and also the participants in the gatherings and their family members. *Ihson* is also conducted to honour people who have passed away; it follows *janoza*.²⁹⁰ Some contemporary reformist *otins* who were educated in religious institutions such as Islamic universities in the post-Soviet period adhere to strict observance of Islamic practices such as *ihson*, *mavlud*, and other religious gatherings. They recommend reading *suras* and giving explanation of the Qur'an and laying a modest *dasturhon*.²⁹¹ Contemporary *otins* also suggest not to chant during the ceremony, but rather to let *otin* read and explain the Qur'an. They want to purify

²⁹⁰ *Janoza* [Ar.] is a funeral service. *Ihson* is usually carried out the third day after the funeral.

²⁹¹ *Dasturhon* [Uz.] is laid out table.

Islam and dismantle the Sufi tradition of chanting poems and reciting the Qur'an in chorus.

I attended an *ihson* which was delivered after the *janoza* of an elder male community member. At the beginning of the ceremony, all the women greeted each other and asked about each other's family members' well-being. These 30 women were relatives and participants of *gaps* and/or other social networks such as school colleagues and community members. They sat at the traditional, low rectangular table²⁹² according to their age. The *otin* arrived and the women socialized and had a meal (soup from pumpkin and beans) and sherbet (juice made from dried apricots) served by the daughters of the hostess. It is believed that the power of the ceremony is passed to the food and other items through the *otin*'s blessings and these blessings pass to the person who passed away.²⁹³

The key element of the ceremony is the recitation of the Qur'an and the explanation of the five pillars of Islam. The ceremony starts when a hostess brings a tray with tea, lump sugar, *isiriq*, raisins, and perfume, and places the tray in front of the *otin* to be blessed. The tray is left to the hostess of the event and her family members. The *otin* recites verses from the Qur'an and stresses the importance of carrying out the five pillars prescribed to Muslims. She emphasizes the importance of performing *namaz* as the light of *namaz* will fill our souls. She discusses going to

²⁹² *Hontahta* [Uz.] is a traditional low table. It is a rectangular, about 50 cm in height and can be different lengths. People sit on the floor/*ko'rpacha*. People also have *ustols* in their houses. *Ustol* is a modern Russian style table, at which one sits on chair. *Ustol* is a borrowed word from Russian. In Russian, table is *stol*.

²⁹³ Some *otins* consider that they have ancestral connections to the family of the Prophet and thus they receive *baraka* from ancestors. *Otins* possess *baraka* and are regarded as holy persons. *Baraka* means that "ineffable, supernatural substance – grace, blessings, superabundance, purity, etc. – communicated from God to the faithful through those individuals who in life and death were endowed with uncommon piety (*taqwa*) or *ihsan* (excellence). Hence, possession of *baraka* provides a person with a divine relation to Allah and privileged position within the social hierarchy. Mere possession of *baraka* is not enough; a person should be able to transmit it to others" (Clancy-Smith, 1994, p. 33). Being sacred provides *otins* with symbolic power that enables them to transmit *baraka* through recitations of the Qur'an, their explanation and reflective inquiry with participants, and giving *potaha* (blessing) to protect and heal people.

hajj. The *otin* drew attention to the physical well-being of persons who should be clean. She stressed that it is important to do *tahorat*²⁹⁴ correctly before the prayer. She told a story about Djabrail Ali Salom who carried out *tahorat*:

We should wash ourselves [*tahorat*]. Djabrail Ali Salom came to the Prophet. There was no water there. When the prophet put his feet down, the water came. The first *tahorat* was made by Djabrail Ali Salom. You know how to make *tahorat*. I will not tell you because you know it.

The Prophet said that when you do *tahorat*, sins go away. Our feet go to so many places and we do not know what kind of place it is. When we wash ourselves, the sins go away from the dirt of the nails. When we do *tahorat*, we wash hands three times and then say: *Bismilahi rahmani rahim*. The place we wash becomes clean. Our body becomes clean. If we do not say *Bismilahi rahmani rahim*, then *tahorat* is not made.

We should brush our teeth. If we do not have a toothbrush, we should wash with our finger. If we wash ourselves, *savob*²⁹⁵ will increase up to 70 times. When we start washing our feet with the left foot, we start washing the biggest toe, when we wash the right feet, we start washing from the smallest toe. On Friday we should cut our nails, because the sickness will be gone according to *hadith*. The right hand should be cut starting with big nail, and left hand with small nail.

The local *otin* stresses the importance of praying and doing right work in the service of Allah.²⁹⁶ This includes keeping faith, praying, doing *zakat*, earning *halol* (honest) money, and going to *hajj* when one's children have settled down and financial conditions allow it:

We should recite *namaz* five times per day. You know all about it. *Roza*²⁹⁷ is the obligation, *namaz* is the obligation, too. We should give *zakat*, too. Instead of having so much spending for a wedding, we should spend money to be with Allah. For example, we can have *ihson* here. We brought *tog'ora* and we should say that this is done to be with Allah. When we went to a wedding and gave money, we should say that this is for *Allah yo'liga*. It is necessary to go to *hajj*. However, the conditions of going to *hajj* should be suitable in your family. Your children should have settled, you earned money honestly. Some people that went to *hajj* come back and do not veil. This is not right.

The *otin* further emphasized the behavioural change in the male dominant behaviour and addiction to alcohol. She said: "Men who drink went to *hajj*, and after

²⁹⁴ *Tahorat* [Uz.] is a ritual washing done before Islamic prayer.

²⁹⁵ *Savob* [Uz.] is a blessing.

²⁹⁶ *Allah yo'liga* [Uz.] means to work in service of Allah.

²⁹⁷ *Roza* [Uz.] is a time of fasting during Ramadan.

they came back they continue drinking. This is not gossiping because I do not mention names. There are calls to go to *hajj*: one way is when Allah calls, the second when the Prophet calls, and the third when the devil calls. When the devil calls, some people go and continue to do devil things there too.” The *otin* drew attention to social issues such as alcoholism and drug abuse, which became widespread among the local population, especially among youth. She seeks to empower communities to stop the consumption of *harom* (alcohol and drugs). She also stresses that *gunoh*²⁹⁸ will be committed if someone continues to drink and does not deal with temptation. The proper behaviour will be rewarded by Allah and will multiply ten or seven hundred times.

Knowledge about the history of Islam, the writings of Islam, the life of the Prophet, and the story of Kaaba are transmitted by *otins* to women in order to preserve, multiply, and pass knowledge from one generation to another. Knowledge transmission takes place in a sacred space²⁹⁹ such as a private home which becomes a space of knowledge and power that strengthens and unites the members of the community. A story is told by an *otin* wherein a child (who later became a Prophet) was taken away by strangers in the market to be raised. The story signifies the importance of intellectual and spiritual powers in terms of wisdom and going beyond class prejudice. The story shows how guidance and moral virtues such as care and support can also provide emotional power to keep communities organic and sustainable:

The Prophet was born in 570, on a Monday in Mecca. His father’s name was Muttal, and his mother’s name was Omina. His grandfather was Abdumuttal.

²⁹⁸ *Gunoh* [Uz.] is a sin.

²⁹⁹ The space becomes sacred after an *otin* recites Qur’anic verses, *hikmats* (hymns that signify Allah; verses that tell about the life and actions of the prophet that are thought to be written by the Uzbek Ahmed Yassavi’s brotherhood), and telling *maslahats* (didactic stories). Ahmed Yassavi is regarded as a second prophet after the Prophet Muhammad who created *hikmats* that supplement the Qur’an (Dzhumaev, 1997). *Otins* perform *hikmats* at *janoza* and *ihons*.

And his other grandfather's name was Andumannap. We should know these names: Andumuttal, Abdummanap, Abduhurshid.

Before the Prophet was born, his father passed away. When he was born, his mother did not feel pain. When a child is born, everyone feels pain. There was no blood, and no singing of birds.

The Arabs had such a tradition: when a child is born, a child is given to a wet-nurse. They went to the bazaar, and no one wanted to take him because he was an orphan. Everyone wanted to have the child of rich people. Only one woman picked him up. In four years, he will be given back to his mother.

His mother passed away when he was six, and his grandfather Abdumuttal took him to bring him up. Abdumuttal had lots of children. He was in trade.

Paigambar [*the Prophet*] marries our mother, Khadija, who was engaged in trade. Our Paigamabar was engaged in trade. He met Hodija ona during his trade. Our Prophet was 25 and Hodija ona was 40 years old. Their children were born in 595 and later Fotima, Zainab, Ruhia, Ibrohim, the latter who passed away.

The usual biography of the Prophet states that after he was orphaned, he was brought up by his uncle, Abu Talib, in the same household with his cousin, Ali ibn Abu Talib. I do not know why the *otin* stresses that the Prophet was raised by his grandfather instead, and does not mention his uncle Abu Talib at all. Perhaps she is advocating an alternative emphasis on Muhammad's grandparents because this is a common practice in Uzbekistan (grandparents raising grandchildren). Knowledge production is subject to the teller's personal interpretation and also the cultural context of raising children in Uzbekistan.

In another story, the *otin* indicates the importance of exercising purity, not only in terms of physical cleanness, but also in the sense of spiritual virtues. Using her authoritative knowledge and symbolic status as *otin*, she indicates through *maslahat* (advice) the virtues of honesty, faithfulness, and not spreading rumours, virtues Allah likes to reward:

We should always be clean. The Prophet went around and heard three people screaming and crying. He decided to find out why. When he went to the first house, he found out that the person goes with urine to *namaz*, therefore the person cries. When he went to another person, he found out that this is a person who gossips. The person who gossips will not go to paradise, says the Qur'an. The person was a gossiper. Whom doesn't Allah like? The person

who gossips, the persons who praises themselves saying I, people whose spirit is bad. Women who cheat on their husbands and husbands who cheat on their wives.

The *otin* read the *Ya Sin sura*, the heart of the Qur'an. She indicated that worshiping Allah is vital after *bomdod*³⁰⁰ or other *namaz*. She recited a poem that seeks the blessing of Allah, in which a person asks for repentance and forgiveness in pursuit of healing. This *otin* is a traditionalist because she recited a poem told by other *otins*. The practice of the recitation of the poem contradicts the idea of newly educated *otins* who think that *otins* should not recite poems, but instead only the Qur'an and *hadith*. The traditional *otin* told the following poem:

<i>La illahy illala</i>	There is no God but God
<i>Kim kumaisa ozidan</i>	Do not stop repeating it
<i>La illahy illala</i>	There is not God but God
<i>Nur ekilar uzida</i>	The light will shine on the face
<i>La illahy illala</i>	There is not God but God
<i>Har kim aitsa kuni tun</i>	Every person should repeat it
<i>Bemor bulmas any joi</i>	The sick person feels relief
<i>Har banda sharmanda</i>	Each servant [<i>slave of God</i>] is embarrassed
<i>Kiemat kun bulganda</i>	When the day of judgement comes
<i>Hayron bo 'lma e banda</i>	Do not be surprised
<i>Jon chikkar</i>	The spirit will come
<i>Sahar etsajanatdan</i>	From paradise
<i>Ular bulur hismatda</i>	If they are in service
<i>Bandasiga mehribon</i>	Kind to each other
<i>Gunohimni kechirgin</i>	Forgive my guilt
<i>Dozoh haroplardan ichirgin</i>	And keep me away from hell
<i>Muhamadu rasululo</i>	Muhammad is the messenger of God

The *otin* asked another woman to read one of the verses. This woman recited the Qur'an with *qira'at* as women noted.³⁰¹ The recitation of the Qur'an shows the

³⁰⁰ *Bomdod* [Uz.] is the morning prayer.

³⁰¹ The significance of the recitation of the Qur'an does not undermine the importance of the written text, but it reminds us that the written text supports the oral transmission of text but is not a major determinant of it. The written text could not have advanced without the accompanying oral tradition of recitation. The history tells how Uthman sent copies of his new Qur'an to the cities and also expert reciters who could teach people to recite. Because of its orthography with different readings of vowels and inflectional endings and unpointed consonants, multiple versions of recitation exist (Graham & Kirmani, 2006).

Reading with *qira'at* is based on observance of linguistic correctness, adherence to the accepted Uthmanic and a sound tradition of communication from the earliest years. The formal

proficiency of the *ilm*³⁰² of the *otin* which is evaluated by the audience as high, good, or bad. Hence, knowledge is indicative of the power and status of the *otin*, which can be conferred or rejected by women.

Otins also spoke about the importance of being respectful to women because they are people of God as men are. The Prophet advises men to respect women. These religious women empower women to demand their basic right to be respected according to the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, *otins* condemn abusive relationships in the families that treat women as the property of men rather than as Allah's beings. Women specify that the status and position of both genders is equal in front of Allah and so is their social status in the family and community.

Different processes and methods of delivering *ihson* may be subject to criticism from local community members. The sister of the event's hostess was arguing with her aunt about the tray with tea, sugar, *isiriq*, and perfume which she did not want to bring into the room. The dispute shows two different Islamic knowledges: the new reformist knowledge that claims purification of Islam with the focus on Qur'anic text, and the second mode of knowledge strongly based on the traditional folk culture. The new reformist Islamic ideologies began to be promulgated by some modern *otins* educated in Islamic universities who adhere to a strict observance of Islam or who had a chance to go to *hajj*.

I shared my experience of participating in the *ihson* with Durдона, a young modern *otincha*. Durдона criticized the performance of the *salavat*³⁰³ as non-Islamic

discipline of reciting/reading (Arb., *ilm al-qira'a*) includes the study of the different readings (*qira'at*) of the written codex or *mushaf* and the techniques and rules of oral recitation, or *tajwid* (rendering excellent recitation of Qur'an). *Tajwid* consists of diverse traditions of vocal recitations of the text. Often stated as a joint discipline, the *ilm al-qira'at wa-l-tajwid* (discipline of readings and recitations) signify the heart of the Muslim tradition of study, preservation of knowledge, and oral presentation of the Qur'an. Muslim piety relies on the discipline of reading and recitation as it renders and preserves God's word as it passed down to Muhammad orally (Graham & Kermani, 2006).

³⁰² *Ilm* [Uz.] is knowledge.

³⁰³ *Salavat* [Uz.] is songs of worship.

because women honoured the birth of the Prophet Muhammad when an old man passed away. She points out the inadequate knowledge of the *otin* who delivered *ihson* and in fact turned *ihson* into *mavlud*. She suggests that for *ihson* there should be reading *suras* of the Qur'an and *hadiths* and giving explanation of them.

They did *salavat* because she did not know the Qur'an. Some women do know Arabic, and they do *salavat*. Those who are educated, they do not do this. They do not do *salavat*. This is the work of those who are not educated, these are those who read little. This is the work of those who want to engage women into activity to spend time.

Mavlud should be delivered without *dasturhon*. Then women sit around and the *otin* explains the Qur'an. In Islam there is no such thing as singing in chorus. In Christianity, for example, Catholics stand to sing in the chorus. We do not have such a practice.

However, for those who do not understand much saying this *salavat* is good. Yet, it is better to read the Qur'an and give explanation of it. *La illaha illa'Llah wa Muhammad rasullullah*³⁰⁴ are the words to honour Allah. These are simple words that we should say every day. However, people do not say it.

This newly educated *otin* also criticized the practice of giving money at the end of the ceremony. She equates this behaviour to poor knowledge and the status of "just a simple *mavludcha otin*." She says that "This is just a simple *mavludcha otin*. When *mavlud* is delivered, money is given. This is what a simple *mavludcha otin* does. It is written that no one should sell the words of Allah for money. This is what we have come to now." Many reformist *otinchalar* criticize the financial pursuits of some of their colleagues who do not carry their service to Allah and thus reject their status and knowledge. However, traditional *otins* give away collected money to people to serve Allah. Hence, local *otinchalar* are engaged in a constant relational power negotiation amongst themselves and community members.

The local processes of delivering *ihson* are subject to criticism and the contestation of right or wrong processes depending on education, social power, expertise, and status in the community. By contesting different modalities of *ihson*

³⁰⁴ *La illaha illa'Llah wa Muhammad rasullullah* [Ar.] is there is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.

and other religious practices *otin oyis* and the community elaborate their own discursive knowledge that answers their social, political, economic, and psychological needs. Moreover, some *otins* through their *hikmats*, recitation of the Qur'an, and *maslahats* increase physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional powers that allow women to seek avenues for change, equality, and social justice.

Bibi Seshanba and Mushkul Kushod - Knowledge and Healing

Rituals and beliefs occupy an important place in the lives of women in Uzbekistan. The beliefs of women are manifested in female spirits³⁰⁵ and female saints³⁰⁶ in combination with women's interest in amulets, pilgrimages to holy places, female vigils, and so on. These beliefs and practices were perceived as women's religion due to the gender segregation norms in Islam (Tolmacheva, 1993). In the research site, the rites of Bibi Seshanba and Mushkul Kushod³⁰⁷ were carried out solely by women. These rites are practised either in times of difficulty such as illness in the family, in cases of the inability to set up a daughter's marriage, or as thanksgiving after the resolution of a problem such as the successful delivery of a child. Women believe that Bibi Seshanba is a protector of women who can help them in their time of pain and suffering, and better their lives. Women reinforce their identity as faithful Muslims through their own scripturalist interpretation of Islam that addresses their basic needs such as health, employment, education and their well-being of family and community members. The gatherings of older and middle-aged women and widows are carried out through their inner *niyat*,³⁰⁸ and provide a space for self-expression, voice, sharing problems, and discussing community issues.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Fertility, ancestor, and hearth spirits.

³⁰⁶ Ambar-ona, Bibi-Seshanba, and Mushkul Kushod.

³⁰⁷ Bibi Seshanba is Lady Tuesday; Mushkul Kushod is the Solver of Difficulties.

³⁰⁸ *Niyat* [Uz.] is inner intentions.

³⁰⁹ Modernists criticize the rituals of Bibi Seshanba and Mushkul Kushod as heterodox.

Women also exercise peacebuilding and social control over the behaviour of their community members. They mock and ridicule male dominant behaviour that harms relationships among people in order to restore and nurture human relations. Social control can also be oppressive when women gossip about both men and women who are sexually involved before marriage or outside of marriage. Yet, gossip as a method of social control can also empower people to be accountable to the human relations they have built.³¹⁰

Women in Ok Yul spoke about the renewal of healing practices among community members related to family and socio-economic difficulties. The hostess of the ceremony of Bibi Seshanba and Mushkul Kushod, Mahpuza opa, told us that she saw and greeted her mother in her dream. The hostess had this dream two or three days before the birthday of her mother. She also saw her stepmother in the dream. She interprets these dreams as a reminder that the anniversary of her mother's death was coming in two days. Mahpusa opa was prompted to carry out these ceremonies in part because of her grief over her mother's death, and also because she believed that her family was under a curse: her grandchildren had fallen into the basement and had become ill. The women who attended the ceremony asked Bibi Seshanba to protect them and their family members and to address such issues as finding a husband for their daughters, getting a job, entering colleges and universities, and a healthy childbirth.

At the event, *non* (traditional bread), *katlama* (fried bread), grapes, almonds, raisins, nuts, *somsa* (pastry with onions and meat, baked in a *tandir*³¹¹ or oven), and fruits (watermelon, melon, apricots, plums) are served. *Otin* Nargiza opa came to the

³¹⁰ Gossips function to to share information (Szwed, 1966), affirm group values and membership and reinforce community values and control (Gluckman, 1963, 1968), and advance individual interests (Paine, 1967).

³¹¹ *Tandir* [Uz.] is a traditional oven made out of clay by men.

ceremony in spite of the official restrictions against delivering the rituals (See her participation in gap network in Chapter 6). She gave *dua*³¹² to the people who resided in the house. She also blessed the participants and their family members that they be healthy, live happy lives with dignity and without mistakes, find husbands and wives for their daughters and sons, have grandchildren, and deliver weddings. She asked Allah to make the families equally wealthy. After the prayer, the women greeted each other and asked about the well-being of all family members. Children played around in the room.

The *otin* said that all children are her children and they quite often stop by her house to talk. She pointed out that some people like children, and there are other individuals who dislike them. Nargiza opa started telling a story that is indicative of her power as a storyteller to appeal to people to respect children and protect them from abuse in the family and community:

The child comes from *jannat*.³¹³ Our *Paygambar* [*Prophet*] played with children a lot. He did not go to work before playing with children. If you do not play with children and take them for entertainment, you will not go to paradise. Children should be treated well. Hazrat Umar was poisonous and his soul was dirty among old people. Our *Paygambar* told Fatima that she can go to see her parents and he will go to see his grandchildren. They missed their grandpa. When he went to see his grandchildren, they started riding him like a camel.

Hazrat Umar approached this man and told him: “You are like a camel for these two unworthy big children, letting them ride you!?” *Paygambar* took the children into his hands and asked: “Do you have children yourself?”

Hazrat Umar answered that he has ten children. He said: “I have never taken children into my hands during my entire life. I do not like the noise of children. My wife takes care of the children fully, washing, brushing, feeding them, and bringing them up. My wife tells the children not to walk around when your father comes but stand in line before I come. She treats me well. When I come home, the children stand in a line and come to greet me.”

“You are deprived of love from Allah,” said the stranger [*Muhammad*]. Children come from *jannat*. The person who does not like children is the unhappiest person in this world.” Then, his [*Hazrat Umar*] eyes opened. “Therefore, you should eat with children, you should walk with

³¹² *Dua* [Uz.] is blessings.

³¹³ *Jannat* [Uz.] is paradise.

children. You should eat with children from one *dasturhon* [tablecloth]. The food becomes *halol* [pure]. The food becomes countless. This food becomes *halol*. If we respect and worship our Paygambar, first we should treat and respect a child well. We are not human beings if we do not treat children respectfully.”

This story relates to the violence against children that sometimes takes place in the families of the local community. On my first day of fieldwork, I attended the funeral of the 18-year-old boy who committed suicide. The Women’s Committee representative was visiting the family and inquiring what happened. The gossips filled the village in with a discussion of the different root causes of the problem. Some said that the relationship between the *kelin* and her husband’s brother was not healthy and the *kelin* accused the boy of waiting for her upon her approaching her house and putting her down verbally. Some nearby neighbours rejected her position and were blaming the daughter-in-law for being abusive towards the boy.

Nargiza opa was blaming a father who was physically abusive towards his son and drove his son to suicide. The son was pasturing four cattle for his family. Nargiza opa said, the boy perhaps thought that if he could not please his parents then it would be better to die. Neighbours tried to understand why the youth committed suicide in their home and neighbourhood space.³¹⁴ The death of a young boy motivated the *otins* to take a leadership role in bringing a social agenda and moral issues into the community. The local *otins* use their cultural power of knowledge of the Qur’an and their position of authority granted by followers to address social issues related to inequality, injustice, oppression, and abuse. Hence, I argue that *otins* renew a paradigm of human relationship in the local communities with the aim to restore, heal, and empower individuals to a proper moral life style. The responses of local *otins*

³¹⁴ I had several informal visits to neighbours who spoke about the death of the boy. The boy’s mother was talking about economic difficulties in the family and also their inability to pay for health care. Criticism of social structures (the *Mahalla* Committee, the Women’s Committee, and other structures) in home spaces is quite common. I argue that the home space can be regarded as a locus of socio-political criticism that carries a potential for social change in Uzbekistan.

stress the human and moral aspects of restoring peace and social justice that fit into a restorative paradigm approach.

The Women's Committee's approach as well as that of the police was investigative and not therapeutic. The job of the *otin* was to use moral teachings to inspire and command better behaviour. The local *otin* in the village was engaged in peacebuilding activities through short- and long-term approaches in the sense of healing and envisioning organic and peaceful communities. The Women's Committee and the police are not trained in social work and they perpetuate patriarchal policy by blaming women in breaking up relationship.

A *lagan*³¹⁵ with half of lump sugar and black raisins was put in front of the *otin*. The *isiriq* was brought in and one of the participants removed its seeds and passed them to the *otin*. A *do'ppi* of blue colour was placed in front of the *otin* which she turned upside down when starting the ceremony. A traditional cup of dry black raisins was passed. Women took a few raisins and placed them on the table. A small piece of cotton was passed to the women. Women began chanting the *salavat* to Mushkul Kushod: "*La illaha illa'Llah wa Muhammad rasullullah. Muhammad, Mushkul Kushod Muhammad. Salovaty bor Muhammad...*"³¹⁶ During the chanting, the women removed the stems from the black raisins that were passed around and put the detached stems into a small piece of cotton. After the ceremony was finished, the pieces of cotton with the raisin stems were thrown into the streaming water in the canal, symbolising that all issues and problems were taken care by supernatural forces. The *otin* passed seven seeds of *isiriq* to each woman to swallow.

³¹⁵ A *lagan* [Uz.] is a traditional round plate.

³¹⁶ *La illaha illa'Llah wa Muhammad rasullullah* [Ar.] is there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God. *La illaha illa'Llah wa Muhammad rasullullah. Muhammad, Mushkul Kushod Muhammad. Salovaty bor Muhammad* [Uz.] is "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God. Prayer for Muhammad, Mushkul Kushod. Praying for Muhammad."

In the Tashkent *oblast*, many *otins* in the local community spoke about the importance of transmitting knowledge to the younger generations to avoid knowledge loss. Nargiza opa reminded the women who attended the Bibi Seshanba and Mushkul Kushod ceremony to pray every day and take responsibility as a parent to teach reading *namaz* to their children. She gave an example of her family: one of her daughters became a *Qori*,³¹⁷ her grandchild goes to a local mosque, and her daughter-in-law had been doing *namaz* for one year. The *otin* presents her daughter-in-law's behaviour as a role model for other community members. The *otin* increases her and family's designated and social power and status that is granted by the individuals in the community due to the *otin's* family proper moral conduct and social behaviour.

The *otin* explains differences between the ways women and men recite the *namaz*:

Men recite *namaz* quickly. Women recite long. Women can recite *namaz* not at a proper time and it is okay because women have lots of work. There is no such excuse; I did not recite *namaz* because I missed the proper time. Women can recite later.

Introducing new modifications for summertime to the religious observance of Islam that favours women's dress code is a way of adapting religious knowledge and practices to the reality of life. In my personal conversation with the *otin*, she suggested shortening the sleeves of traditional dresses older women wear in summer because it was too hot.

The proprietary rituals such as Bibi Seshanba and Mushkul Kushod also provide a space for gossiping and mocking the behaviour of men to enforce social order and cohesion of the community. For instance, women were talking about one neighbour who lives in the city and occasionally comes to the village with his family to take care of his house and *hovli*. Women said that he used to come often but

³¹⁷ *Qori* [Uz.] is a Qur'an reciter.

somehow his inspiration disappeared. One extended household member said that she used to clean his *hovli* but after she moved out, no one cleans his *hovli*. Some women recounted how they cut his trees because they became big. Others recalled that their family members helped this man to make traditional bricks, build the house, or lay the roof. One woman joked and said that when this man comes here and starts living, we will all wear suits. Everybody laughed because everyone knew that their neighbour always wears a suit with a tie.

The man likes to blame community members if the pipes from his house disappear or something went wrong. Women felt that this man does not know how to thank and acknowledge women's help and support. When one of the participants of the event said that the pipe and the water heater were rotten, the *otin* replied that we would fix this problem. In spite of the mockery of the neighbour and laughter, women also create a space for mutual support for the neighbour so that he can feel part of the community.

At the end of the ceremony the *otin* blessed the house, the people who lived in the house, and the mothers and fathers with grey hair. She wished children would grow well and be healthy. Women started giving money and the *otin* refused to take it. When the women insisted, the *otin* said that she would give away all money to people in need. Women passed money and asked *otin oyi* to give blessing to the family members. *Otin oyi* gave a blessing to everybody by saying: "Let the family members be healthy. Let us meet at good times at the *dasturhon*. Let people be rich, *dasturhons* full of food, and let you be healthy."

The hostess of the ceremony gave a white towel to each person containing food that was blessed by *otin* during the ceremony.

Conclusion

The end of the Soviet empire and the emergence of a new Independent state of Uzbekistan prompted Muslims to reflect critically about their selfhood in relation to the rest of the Muslim world. Access to religious knowledge enabled people to construct their multiple Muslim identities. This is reflected in divide along multiple identity dimensions between new modernist otins and traditional otins.

The new modernist otins received education at universities and/or traveled to hajj, and, hence, have different sources of knowledge about Islam. Some of these religious practitioners adhere to scripturalist interpretations to purify Islam. They want to bring a new modernist agenda similar to Jadids' modernisation agenda in the early 20th century, calling to purify Islam from pre-Islamic traditions and beliefs in female spirits and saints, visiting shrines, mazars, and holy places. However, other otins diverge from the true orthodox practices of Islam. These otins may have local sources of knowledge (see mavlud in this chapter) based on available literature and other methods of accessing information (dars,³¹⁸ ceremonies, informal exchanges of knowledge). These practitioners follow traditional interpretations of Islam which are adapted, blended, and considered by local people to be part of a folk culture and traditional life.

These religious practioners apparently grounded in modern versus more traditional thought contest each other's knowledge to define true Islam and its practices. Women who attended *dars* and rituals engage in a reflexive way in what Islam means to them and how they can structure and reorder their ways of living in Islamic ways. Women followers decide if they want to grant legitimacy to *otins'* discursive knowledge, and hence authorise their knowledge. *Otins'* knowledge can be

³¹⁸ *Dars* [Uz.] is a class where *otins* teach the Qur'an to women and reflect about the content.

questioned and may result in lowering their expert power, and, consequently, status and power in the community.

Otins and healers' sacredness and knowledge of *hikmats*, *maslahats*, Sufism, *hadith*, and Qur'anic texts are resources to enhance and to educate their communities. Their status and symbolic power can be maintained if they preserve and transmit their sacredness to communities as their duty to Allah, themselves and their family members, by serving as a role model in living in the *halol* Islamic way. They may also give classes and hold ceremonies without pursuing financial incentives. The religious leaders' power can easily diminish if they violate any social norms and expectations that would decrease the legitimacy of their ability to influence the spiritual guidance of people.

The research findings suggest that some religious practitioners reproduce and reinforce patriarchy and gender subordination that is questioned by their listeners (as in the case of *mavlud* ceremony). I suggest that on the other hand, some religious practitioners are engaged in *ijtihad* when they call attention to socio-economic, cultural, psychological, and philosophical aspects of life with the aim to restructure relationships towards equality, respect, harmony, and justice. *Otins* highlight the equality of women with men as women are divine beings, too. Further, they condemn violence against women, children, and elders. Through their access to divine power, healers and *otins* pursue transformative justice to maintain peace and renew communities. In the context of socio-economic changes such as insecurity and unemployment, the role of religious practitioners is vital in bringing Islamic discourses of equality of women and men and equal gender relations.

Religious practitioners employ their human and symbolic capital to act as socially responsible actors and empower communities to question norms and

behaviours through *maslahats* in female rituals. These *maslahats* originate from the Qur'an, *hadith*, and Sunnah, which *otins* appropriate to address social and moral dilemmas in the communities. I argue that religious practitioners in Uzbekistan move forward their own distinctive educational system of knowledge as a political means to maintaining or modifying the appropriation of social order through storytelling, chanting, and *ijtihad*. As healers and *otins* do not have a legitimate power to enforce rules (unlike, for example, the Women's Committee), these women of authority also use other mechanisms to change improper social behaviour, including gossip, ostracism, and ridicule. People gossip to exercise social control, but also to empower communities for change. As these religious leaders are mediators between the Divine and communities, they delegate responsibility to God to sanction wrongdoers and bring them back to communities.

Women healers empower women and men to "talk back" and come to voice where personal experience will be heard, valued, and not marginalized. Healers are engaged in bodied gendered politics when they execute social control over unfaithful men's bodies and their sexual life (reading over their clothes and touching their underwear with a knife). Healers want to ensure that men value their Uzbek wives, and do not reproduce colonial attitudes and behaviour towards indigenous women. Hence, rituals are a means for remaking colonial attitudes and beliefs toward women.

Rituals with a storytelling approach represent the strategic use of discursive knowledge to understand and negotiate tangible and intangible dimensions of the conflicts between persons and communities in Uzbekistan. Rituals are strategic approaches to deal with conflicts in rational and direct modes. Both storytelling and rituals are the means by which the community discusses the identity of Muslim selfhood and collectively develops knowledge of proper moral behaviour for its

members. Similarly, rituals confirm and transform people's worldviews, identities, and relationship with others. Women's rituals observed in Uzbekistan are expressed not only verbally but also through symbols, senses, acts, and emotions. These processes allow the participants of the events and later their family members to engage the whole community in creating shared knowledge, envisioning the future, and sharing power among community members.

Healing practices include many symbolic and animistic elements such as isiriq, tea, sugar and other types of food, perfume, and clothes that are blessed to transform communities through the relationship of healers to divine power and knowledge. Through spirits and cosmology expressed in healing rituals, healers and women restructure communities by renewing the relations and communications towards egalitarian principles.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION:

GRASSROOT STRUCTURES OF EMPOWERMENT AND PEACEBUILDING

Women's Knowledge, Power, and Action

The crisis in the economy and society that occurred in the 1980s and after the collapse of the Soviet Union had a serious impact on the agricultural sector in Uzbekistan. The indebted collective farms were no longer able to pay their workers' wages. The restructuring of the agricultural sector has been gradual since many of the collective and state farms were not functioning during the 1990s. The agricultural reforms led to the transformation of collective farms and *kolkhozes* to *shirkats*, and *shirkats* to independent private farms (*fermer ho'jaligi* in Uzbek) and allocated subsidiary plots for self-subsistence (*tomorka*). In Ok Yul, families' dependence on household and farm land and non-agricultural informal activities increased. For rural women in Ok Yul, the *ogorod*³¹⁹ had become the main source of food security for the family. Those households which leased land on plan or rented land from farmers to harvest horticultural produce for international trade to Kazakhstan and Russia were bankrupt. The complex interactions of households with markets depend on the availability and stability of political and economic opportunities for *dehqons*.

The agricultural reforms were accompanied by the loss of jobs and the social protection. This affected women and men differently depending on their resources, education, household status, and social networks. The major research finding suggests that women, in particular young women, had to give up their jobs in the public sector

³¹⁹ *Ogorod* [Russ.] is a household garden.

and undertake agricultural work, which some of them had never done. The significant finding proposes that there was a process of *dehqonization* of intellectual labour. These women diversified their livelihood strategies by, for example, working in *ogorods* and agriculture, plus bearing the domestic burden of cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, performing life cycle events, and being involved in the social life of their community. The lack of mechanisation of agricultural work and reliance on mutual harvesting agreements between kin and community members increased women's workload. Young and middle-aged women had to undertake new livelihood small-scale activities such as tailoring, baking, and trade in local markets in the city of Tashkent. Thus, the agrarian reforms taking place in the agricultural and trade sectors of the economy enhanced the feminisation of labour and affected livelihood patterns and intra-household relations along multiple identity lines such as gender, class, and age.

In this study, I presented accounts of women's income-generating activities and of their social and savings networks, such as *gap* and *chernaya kassa*, and showed how these women make sense of their economic interests, including how they select livelihood activities and enter markets. The households' income-generating activities were clustered into coping, preserving, and accumulating. Some respondents with coping strategies consider their living as "survival" and "coping" with state constraints and unfilled promises of the administration to improve people's livelihood. These households gained their main income from agricultural work and were subject to severe poverty. Participation of impoverished women in *gap* saving networks is limited. Typically, women with coping strategies participate in small *gap* networks, and have a history of withdrawing from these networks.

Women with preserving strategies did not talk about constraints, but rather stressed the enormous opportunities that government provided after Uzbekistan gained independence. This category of women carried out entrepreneurial and artisan activities whereby more resources, investment, and cooperation took place among household members, kinship, and community. Some of these women participated in multiple *gap* networks and invested *gap* money into social and livelihood activities. Women highlighted the opportunity to earn money by sewing, baking, and opening shops, activities that were discouraged under the Soviet regime. Women indicated home-based informal activities allowed them to take care of children, perform household duties, and, most importantly, not to pay taxes. Hence, I suggest that state non-interference with small-scale activities is a factor that allows women to generate income and improve their own and families' well-being and status.

Households with accumulation strategies focused on private farming and large-scale business such as furniture-making, brick-making and ceramic workshops. These entrepreneurial activities were male-dominated with the exception where one woman ran a furniture workshop that was planned to expand to a furniture-making plant. Both the symbolic power of her husband as community leader, and their respective extended social networks were significant factors enabling the business expansion. Their participation in *gap* networks is extensive. This new class of entrepreneurs interacts with state structures, and their activities are subject to state regulations.

Knowledge is a key driver of income generation. Women acquired agricultural knowledge about seeds, planting, and harvesting from their kin and community members. Knowledge was widely shared. Women also experimented with Dutch seeds as they did not know watering methods and the time of harvest. They indicated

that the Dutch potato becomes local because it is grown in a new local climate with local knowledge.

However, there was also an absence of knowledge, skills, and experience and its sharing. Some women harvested corn late because they did not know the proper time for growing and harvesting their crops. This led to reduced prices when they brought their corn to the market. An important issue was finding good seeds. Some individuals who bought tomato and cucumber seeds in local markets in Tashkent from Uzbek traders were not very satisfied with their quality. Those who bought seeds from Koreans stated that the quality of seeds was better because they were less vulnerable to diseases. Koreans also sold medicine and fertilizers in the market and advised people on how to use these chemicals. For many women local TV programs became the source of agricultural, baking, cooking, tailoring, and other knowledge. Women experimented and innovated their produce to produce better quality horticultural produce or commodities to generate a higher income.

Moreover, my research suggests looking at individual power currencies and networks of power that interplay in intra-household relations instead of homogenizing hierarchical structure of households. Livelihood activities create new dynamics among household members across gender, age, and household status. It is widely and automatically perceived by many foreign scholars that households headed by the oldest generation are hierarchical by nature. The applied bargaining approach to household analysis is supplemented further with notions of power.

The research suggests that power and social control of resources such as land and income-generating activities is contested by the extended families residing in the same or other household plots of land. I suggest that individual families, especially young families, are motivated by their own welfare maximization, and this creates a

new dynamic in the social control of resources and power. Consequently, power is consolidated not with elders but rather with the nuclear family that has the highest income in the extended household. The young nuclear families subvert the rules and norm of *bir qozon*³²⁰ in gender discriminatory ways. They can sell their sister's land and/or appropriate more land by building houses on common extended household plot of land. Divorced women, who lost their land because their brothers sold their piece of land, are given the smallest room. Furthermore, families with higher power appropriate the whole or some parts of *ogorod* for building greenhouses and growing horticultural produce for trade. Ethnographies of conflicts with income-generating activities reflecting knowledge, power and gendered construction of meaning are reflected in the household space.

I argue that network power which manifests across gender lines consolidates in nuclear family units (husband and wife). Many women had to drop their teaching jobs and work in greenhouses because of the higher income they can generate than in the public sector. Men tended to keep their jobs, especially if they worked in a police system because of more secure payments and higher salaries. Women's public status worsened as they lost or quit prestigious jobs even though they were able thus to generate higher income. Women and men decided their income-generating activities together, but their new purchases such as land, house, and means of transportations belonged to men. Hence, economic incentives were shaped by cultural norms and expectations that favoured men.

The radical change of gender roles took place in the households where women resided with their husbands (*ichki kuyovs*) in their natal houses. The poor income-generating abilities of *ichki kuyovs* and their situation of propertylessness and

³²⁰ *Bir kozon* [Uz.] is one pot.

landlessness worsened the situation of many households. Young married women and even mothers-in-law pooled their income-generating activities to support their or their daughter's families. Young women claimed property rights especially if they lived with their brothers' families on one or more household plots of land. They did not want to rely on their brothers. These women justified their claims by reinterpreting and challenging Islamic norms that oblige men to support sisters' families in case of socio-economic challenges. Women reinterpreted the meaning of their roles and status within their families as equal members to claim property especially when there was no hope of male support in the family.

Brocklesby and Fischer (2003) critique the shortage of community development thinking in SL approaches. They point out that this may be because the sustainable livelihood changes are carried out externally with no respect to local community contexts. The scholars specify that sustainable livelihood interventions “embody a technocratic development drive, which is at odds with the principles, ethos, and values that underpin much community development work” (p. 185). This study examined women's savings networks and indigenous social networks which have an element of conformity and social control of community members, but they predominantly shape individual and community empowerment. *Gap* and *chernaya kassa* serve as a transformative mechanism to shape and reshape social relations to undermine structural inequalities in households, among kin and within communities that allow people to access resources and mobilize them for individual and collective social empowerment.

Women's livelihood activities in Ok Yul, their participation in socio-economic empowerment networks such as *gap* and *chernaya kassa*; and their economic, cultural and spiritual life form an art of their self-governance, a community development

model. They pursue multiple paths for improving their well-being, healing, ecological peacebuilding, and community empowerment through the process of re-making and re-shaping their identities, knowledge, and ways of doing and acting.

Women's ways of mobilizing their networks are rooted in feminist, anticolonial, and women's network traditions. Women's socio-economic networks produce not just social and economic capital, but also raise collective consciousness and resistance to oppression. I consider women to be strategic agents interacting with socio-economic opportunity structures, using *gap* to set and change rules and processes through reflective practices to advance the capacity of network members, household members, and the community.

This community model is part of the narrative life of women located in a narrative structure of a society. Rituals, livelihoods, life cycle events, indigenous stories shape and transform many people's worldviews and actions in Uzbekistan. People also influence and develop new knowledge discourses related to women's equality, Islam, patriarchy, distributive justice, and empowerment. The components of vision for social change are justice, equality, sacredness, harmony, peace, independence, and interdependence.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The results of this research have implications for theory and practice in the field of development, gender, and conflict resolution.

Sustainable Livelihood

The first implication is that this study advances the SL approach which was mostly applied to examine rural livelihoods to design poverty alleviation strategies. The SL framework is applicable to the post-socialist context in Central Asia where

poverty is one of major social issues people are coping with. Moreover, the SL framework stresses subsistence and survival in the context of economic shock. The previous rural livelihood studies carried out in Central Asia stressed the vulnerability of households (Dudwick, et al., 2003; Gomart, 2003; Kuehnast, 2003), but ignored the diverse spectrum of household and individuals' livelihood strategies and response sets. Rather than essentializing and associating post-socialism with poverty, I examined the meanings of lived experiences and knowledges of people who manage diverse and complex income-generating activities during post-socialist rural transformations. The research findings suggest that women and their households performed three diverse responses within coping livelihood strategies: the first is depleting, the second is maintaining the same condition, and third is accumulating and being able to invest in property construction and carrying out livelihood activities. Households with coping, preserving, and accumulating sets of responses showed a tendency toward local and international trade with dense social networks and symbolic capital.

In advancing the SL framework, I suggest including cultural and symbolic capital in the list of resources that development scholars study. I want to suggest that cultural capital of livelihood knowledge and social contacts are the authoritative resources of symbolic capital that interact with market and state structures in making it possible for people to pursue income-generating activities in a gender specific ways (e.g., furniture, brick making, and cookie-making workshops). This study supports the work of the few scholars (for ex.:Trevisani, 2007b) who stressed the importance of symbolic capital in pursuit of livelihood activities in Uzbekistan. However, these categories need to be further studied and theorized to understand the role of symbolic

capital in enhancing livelihood activities for sustainable peace and justice in post-socialist space.

The research showed that in the majority of cases women and men exercise joint management and control of livelihood activities. In fact, women with coping strategies who are engaged in small-scale trade have a direct interaction with markets. Many women with preserving and accumulating strategies enable men to negotiate with markets and state structures. Participants' cultural understanding about who negotiates with the market and on what terms depended on age, marital status, and gender. It is in fact women with coping strategies who crossed cultural and gender prescriptive boundaries to negotiate with markets. Private entrepreneurial businesses are male dominated and women have to strategize their interactions with markets and state structures through their spouses or other male kin networks. The differing symbolic capital that men and women possess, and their diverse interactions with markets show how symbolic capital and economic capital are interdependent.

Many livelihood studies overlook how gender and generation play a role in accessing and managing resources on behalf of household members with the exception of a few of the recent studies by feminist scholars (Beall, 2002). This research examines types of constraints and gender-based violence women experience. The study enriches feminist discourse by demonstrating how people of different ages, genders, and generations pursue diverse goals and how they represent themselves as actors responding to land reforms and socio-economic changes in the country. In the context of this research women stressed such aspects of their lives as constraints, choices, opportunities, values, and the way they envision the future.

Ethnographies of Gender and Conflict

I suggest that SL framework can be enhanced by examining ethnographies of gender and conflict especially in extended households. These ethnographies of conflicts are reflected in women's narratives, power, language, knowledge production, and construction of meaning-making. The multivocality and multiple layers of conflicts in the pursuit of individual goals give a gendered understanding of access to resources and carrying out livelihood activities. These ethnographies of gender and conflict are reflected in the contested space where the family with a higher income occupies a bigger and better place than other members of the household. These contested spaces are encoded in artefacts such as pictures which show how gendered bodies, power and space communicate and inform each other.

Ethnographies of gender and conflict can also be informed by socio-economic and structural forces that drive change and also are subject to change. Furthermore, gender, culture, economy, class, ethnicity, race, history, religion, environment, and politics all influence the conflicts and shape people's identity, power, and status. Yet, people also construct, question and transform notions of gender, culture, religion, and politics through discursive knowledge, reflective inquiry and action.

Conflicts exist between and within persons, household and community members, and external corporate actors. Individuals, state organs, and corporations use different conflict styles and tactics (competition, avoidance, compromise, collaboration, and accommodation) and different tactics in dealing with conflicts (negotiation, mediation, arbitration, gossip, ridicule, dreams, protest, stories, compliance, theft, rituals). These styles and tactics offer ways to understand power dynamics and inequalities across gender lines. Men and women may use the same conflict styles but the ways women mobilise social networks to deal with conflicts

were different from men. Women resorted to ritual healing practices (Bibi Seshanba and Mushkul Hushod) and healers who are considered heterodox and subject to criticism by men. Women's religion enables them to create a sacred space and use spiritual power to influence positive outcome such as respect, understanding, equality, and social justice. This is the vision of community development women strive for.

Gender and Globalisation

SL lenses allow the researcher to explore the vulnerability of households to economic stresses and shocks, yet the model poses limitations in examining ethnographies of gender and globalisation. The globalisation process implemented through corporations and the notion of sustainability is debatable here. I argue that a foreign seed industry is imposing severe limitations on the lives of rural people in terms of reducing biodiversity and creating a new imperial dependency on foreign markets. Women plant these seeds by hand and carefully, while men throw other local seeds manually. The cultural constraints where women tend to do all intensive labour which requires physical power derived from their bodies interact with global markets that foster the development of gender intensified human labour.

The study shows that seed accessibility to middle class *dehqons*, and availability of social networks, play key roles in interacting with seed market and sale of horticultural produce to Kazakhstan and Russia. It is the middle-class *dehqons* who are able to adapt to economic restructuring and improve their well-being, by contrast with households with a coping set of responses. There is a growing gap between poor and middle class *dehqons* who use different seeds and knowledge with innovation and experimentation.

Conversations about globalization, socio-economic difficulties, and gender subordination took place in domestic space. I argue that in the context of political

repressions in Uzbekistan, domestic space is considered a safe space for freedom of expression of social and economic criticism. Domestic space can be theorized as a platform to exercise agency to overcome social and economic challenges. These conversations about social justice and duties represent social movement where people question social policies and structures.

Gender, Islam, and Livelihoods

The intersectionality of gender, Islam and livelihood in this research gave new perspectives on the agency of local women. The research contributes to an extensive body of studies on changing conditions of Muslim women in geographical places and historical periods, dealing with socio-economic issues, women's productive work and community development. Women identify the cause of poverty as lack of budgeting knowledge and skills. They also link poverty to lack of spirituality and inability to multiply existing resources.

Women's agency is expressed in language politics and work, "*harakat, harakat, harakat; harakatda baraka.*"³²¹ These notions of taking actions stress the importance of work that comes with sacredness. The moral values expressed in local notions of *halol* and *sabr* empower local communities to carry out livelihood activities honestly, respectfully, diligently, and patiently.

Empowerment

Empowerment lenses helped me to understand social changes in gender relations and identities building on gender and development approaches of Kabeer (1999) and Moser (1989). The ability to make choices is a key to the notion of empowerment analysis. Kabeer and Moser distinguish between first order and second

³²¹ *Baraka* [Uz.] is blessing.

order choices. First order choices are life strategic life choices: selection of livelihood activities, the decision where to live, freedom of mobility. These strategic life choices help to determine choices of less importance. Moser suggests that practical needs such access to credits and water, health care, and food can be accessed without defying power relations or gender division of work. These researchers suggest that there is a hierarchy of choices and consequently some basic needs have more value than others.

Reorganizing Space for Multidimensional Empowerment

I suggest that these distinctions are not sufficient to differentiate the first order and the second order choices rural women in Ok Yul make. For example, accessing traditional saving networks as *gap* was of strategic importance. First, the networks informed coping, preserving, and accumulating sets of responses, and second, in many cases, *gap* networks allowed women to improve their well-being and challenge traditional ways of living. Some women decided to move to their natal houses and subvert cultural and gender ideologies. I argue that choices are of transformatory significance in accessing saving networks in terms of paradigms: (1) economic outcomes: poverty alleviation, socio-economic empowerment, redistribution of resources; (2) human outcomes: knowledge; and (3) psychological outcomes when *otins* in *gaps* give spiritual advice to women and all are engaged in voicing their opinion, healing, meaning making, and conflict resolution.

Gap overlaps with other women's gatherings such as *mavluds*,³²² *ihsons*,³²³ Bibi Seshanba, and Mushkul Kushod wherein *otins* and healers give spiritual advice to change social norms and behaviour. These three paradigms empower women in

³²² *Mavlud* [Uz.] is a commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

³²³ *Ihson* [Uz.] is a ceremony to honour Allah and to make special requests in order to receive blessing.

Uzbekistan to reorganize gendered space for social, economic, human, and psychological well-being, challenging inequalities and women's subordination.

Gender Roles and Social Changes in the Lives of Peoples

My study stresses the importance of examining masculine identities and men's roles that affect women's empowerment. The socio-economic transformations changed cultural ideals and practices leading to reconceptualization of masculinity and femininity in the research site. Traditional marriage patterns were reconfigured drastically in post-socialist space in Uzbekistan. As a response to these changes, men started living in their bride's houses, acquiring a status of *ichki kuyovs* and as a result, a status of *Other*. In this dissertation I gave examples of how women residing with *ichki kuyovs* continued and/or diversified their income generating activities to cover food and other expenses and thus, acquired a new status of breadwinners. Many *ichki kuyovs* gave up their breadwinner role to pursue their individual autonomous goals of well-being.

People in Ok Yul started seeing a new direction in men's behaviour; some men started borrowing money, stealing food from their bride's family and sending it to their natal families. I argue that women's income generating activities are pushing the cultural boundaries and patterns of living to transform and reshape them to meet their individual and a new family needs. These new gender roles and order for many impoverished people in Ok Yul are uncomfortable, and not empowering. However, young women who were able to earn high income and had support of their parents felt empowered. They decided to purchase land with the help of their parents and build autonomous dwellings away from their grooms' families.

A right of ownership informs people about the potential to make choices (Kabeer, 1994). Muslim women in Bangladesh and Palestine waive their land rights to

their brothers so that women in future may claim support if their marriage breaks up (Kabeer, 2001a; Moors, 1995). Islam encourages brothers to take care of sisters and the waiving of land ownership to brothers provides women with material reasons for entitlement. Kabeer points out that this exchange may reveal the inferior status of women, but the fact that the local community acknowledges women's land rights provides women with a resource to further bargain for their land rights. There were a few cases when women started claiming land rights in rural areas in Bangladesh.

I suggest that religious women condemned men's avoidance of taking on breadwinner's responsibilities and emphasized men's obligation to take care of their female family members. Some of these women support women's (single, widowed, divorced, or living with *ichki kuyovs*) land claims. Women with *ichki kuyovs* and in distress claimed their rights for land. They did not want to rely on Islam and thus confer power to their brothers and community. I argue that women's rejection of Islam as regards property rights and redefining gender ideology in making choices constitutes empowerment. Claiming land rights changes cultural reproduction embedded in values and beliefs which enable women to pursue social justice and equality. In Ok Yul, there was declining evidence of brothers and male family members who took care of their sisters.

Indigenous Approach to Empowerment

Finally, I advocate an indigenous approach to empowerment that considers people's accumulated knowledge expressed in language (metaphors, images, and symbols) and cultural notions with the aim to understand local concepts of empowerment. Knowledge is an enormous social resource to women who are able to question the morality of income generation, notions of poverty, and expenditure in the households. New modern reformist religious women stressed that socio-economic

opportunities can be carried out with *sabr* and *halol* with moral values. They questioned consumerism and a strong desire for material goods and criticized poor planning in budgeting expenses in families, especially where food security is a problem. These modern religious women drew attention to women's agency, stressing budgeting skills and proper moral life livelihood choices women make in guarding their resources.

Many women in Ok Yul shared discourses of empowerment expressed in speaking, working, and taking actions. "*Harakat, harakat, harakat. Harakadtda Baraka*" (Action, action. In action, there is blessing). Women in the village had a solution to the new post-communist reality: building greenhouses, planting Dutch cauliflower, and planning harvesting to take advantage of market conditions. Hence, women strategically planned livelihood activities, acted, and multiplied their resources. In contrast to modern reformist religious women, these women-entrepreneurs stressed *harakat* in action rather than *sabr* and *halol*. Neither reformist religious women nor women-entrepreneurs accepted feminism, nor did they use the word "empowerment."

Conflict Resolution and Empowerment

Many conflict resolution theories concentrate on the spectrum of the western conflict resolution techniques ranging from reactive to proactive: force, adjudication, arbitration, negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation, without considering diversity of indigenous conflict resolution methods. These theories are based on rational and linear strategies to address "incompatible goals" and "human needs" Galtung (1996). Fischer and Ury's model of negotiation of *Getting to Yes* suggests separating people from the problem and focusing on the interests, not positions, of parties (Fischer, Ury, & Patton, 1991). These conflict transformation concepts contribute significantly to

solving tangible dimensions of conflicts, but ignore human and psychological dimensions of conflicts such as emotions and healing. I advocate for inclusion of indigenous conflict resolution approaches that are drivers for community empowerment and peacebuilding. I do not want to idealize indigenous methods of conflict resolution as an ideal way of resolving conflicts. Rather, I look at how women and men actually address socio-economic, psychological, spiritual, environmental, and mental issues.

Most Peace and Conflict Studies literature examining indigenous conflict resolution systems tends to stress the approach and its usefulness for interpersonal and intercommunity disputes, but undermines critical aspects of how indigenous conflict resolution approaches solve livelihood issues in a new socio-economic and cultural context. More in-depth exploration of what negotiation approaches exist, and how these negotiation processes are implemented and mediated by gender relations, will provide a better understanding of the gender implications in conflict dispute resolution systems. Such study will enrich the fields of feminism, peace and conflict studies, and development by exploring ways communities can redefine their identity, power and status to build peace and justice.

Resistance

Furthermore, understanding of resistance is usually phrased around collective goals and interests challenging hegemonic state power. The finding of this study is that people in Ok Yul do not distance themselves from the state as do some indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia, but rather integrate within the state to pursue their own interests. They pursue individual and also collective goals and interests through livelihood, ritual, and storytelling activities to gain economic, political, social, psychological, and cultural empowerment. Hence, resistance is about claiming

and reinforcing multivocality: voice, power, authority, and identity. Resistance is about envisioning a future and creating peace in communities with all their members.

Rural women in Uzbekistan criticise the discourse of *Othering* when they are perceived as oppressed and need to continue to liberate themselves from patriarchy, open their bodies, express their sexuality openly, and work as men. Women assert that they do work hard and perform an enormous amount of unpaid labour that they quantify. Furthermore, the burden of *Othering* identity is reinforced by some men who perceive non-indigenous women as superior to their wives.

Resistance in peace and conflict studies is usually considered a work of the oppressed group to speak against injustice and inequalities. I suggest that peacebuilding should be focused on addressing oppressors to raise their consciousness, rather than only the consciousness of the oppressed. Freire (2000) and peace scholars argue about the importance of raising consciousness of the oppressed, focusing and reinforcing the construction of the discourses of the *Other*. It is precisely the perception that *Other* women lack critical consciousness, reflexivity and speaking which inspired colonisers to target women as part of the colonial projects of women's emancipation. This centeredness on *Other* continues to promote western narrative ideology of domination.

Rituals and Storytelling – Community Empowerment

In this thesis I demonstrated how both rituals and storytelling serve as methods of respect, recognition, empowerment, healing, emotional support, and solving conflicts. I advocate for a multidimensional approach which includes, rather than separates, rituals and storytelling in studying folk culture in peace and conflict resolution studies. Both rituals and storytelling help individuals and communities at the local level to address tangible and intangible dimensions of conflicts which form

innovative, indigenous knowledge. These approaches empower both women and men to deal with social trauma, inequality, patriarchy, and abuse and also to envision the future.

I argue that local healers and *otins* are peacebuilders who use their cultural power of knowledge of Qur'an, Sufism, and shamanism to address social and economic issues in their communities. Hence, I argue that *otins* reconceptualise and reintroduce paradigms of human relationship in the local communities in order to restore, heal and empower individuals to a proper moral life style. These religious leaders' approaches focus on human and moral aspects of restoring peace and justice that fits into restorative paradigm approach.

Grassroots Approaches to Peacebuilding

People in Uzbekistan do not trust and generally avoid using the modern court system that was created in Soviet times. The recent change in the Women's Committee structure was that *otin oyis* were included in investigating family issues, but did not have a major voice in resolving conflicts (Interview with Marguba opa, Women's committee representative). I suggest that the government is attempting to indigenize a western court structure, but its effectiveness is doubtful in solving interpersonal conflicts. It is apparent that women are under no illusion that a court system functioning in the retributive paradigm, determining who is a criminal and carrying out the punishment, will help them.

Court systems and the Women's Committee do not transform the relationships of people who are in a conflict. In the majority of cases, women do not approach the Women's Committee for solving interpersonal problems, but resort to healers and *otin oyis*. Some local *otins* and healers in the village are nurturing peace through accessing their divine power to turn profane space to sacred in order to provide therapy and

healing and envisioning organic and peaceful communities. Hence, it is neither the government nor Women's Committee agenda to transform societies; rather women have their own vision of transforming societies.

I want to suggest that healers and *otin oyis* were aware of the ongoing complex social transformations both women and men cope with, such as increasing rural-urban and international migration, economic constraints and opportunities, increasing breakup of families, and insecurities. Their spectrum of active conflict resolution techniques vary from *ijtihad*, *maslahat*, and the Sufi ritual of chanting, to bargaining with patriarchy and systemic inequalities in a society. These women do discuss and contest each other's knowledge to reconfigure their modalities of understanding Islam and its applicability to the lives of women. By contesting different modalities of *ihson*, *mavlud*, and other religious practices *otin oyis* jointly with the community develop their own discursive knowledge that answers its social, political, economic, and psychological needs. Moreover, these modalities of consciousness-raising increase physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional virtues that enable women to work towards social justice.

This research found that women's collective resistance to patriarchy, domestic violence, and socio-economic economic changes such as unemployment operate at levels of individual and collective agency in the space of social and savings networks and peacebuilding rituals. These forms of collective resistance are social movements which foster critical thinking, relationship-building, social networks, knowledge production, and dissemination about livelihood activities, seeds, markets, and Islamic practices and processes of conflict resolution.

I situate women's narratives, social networks of healing, and saving networks within decolonizing research values and approaches. Smith (1999) suggests that

decolonizing research draws on processes, approaches, and methodologies – while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities – which are critical elements of a strategic research agenda (pp.115-116). I should acknowledge that I use the western term “empowerment” because of the limitations of the English language vocabulary. I do recognise that women’s empowerment of each other is necessary. The *mavlud* case study demonstrates that some religious reformist women suppress consciousness through their patriarchal poems. In this case it was the women listeners who challenged *otin* and raised her consciousness. Hence, my objection is the binary of unempowered/empowering and the assumption that unempowered is without consciousness and empowering is conscious. I argue that consciousness-raising takes place in women’s storytelling when they the narrator and listener share knowledge, mutually enrich and empower each other.

My key concern is that empowerment simultaneously puts a person into an inferior, subordinate position of the oppressed whose consciousness should be raised and thus empowered. Thus, I also do not buy into Freire’s consciousness raising approach of the oppressed that consciousness needs to be raised by them in struggle against the oppressors. Instead, I suggest raising the consciousness of the oppressors and letting them work on their own prejudice and assumptions will create a future platform for mutual exchange of ideas and actions with the oppressed.

My dissertation looked at continuity and discontinuity of socio-economic, cultural, psychological, and political goals women and men consciously pursue in their lives. Within my decolonizing agenda, I want to claim that that I did not want to characterize women’s healing and peacebuilding methods as a version of emerging feminism or even Islamic feminism. Women in Ok Yul argued that they acted as agents who empowered themselves and also their own families historically. Many of

them counterposed themselves to western feminists arguing that feminism is a new term for western women more so than for them.

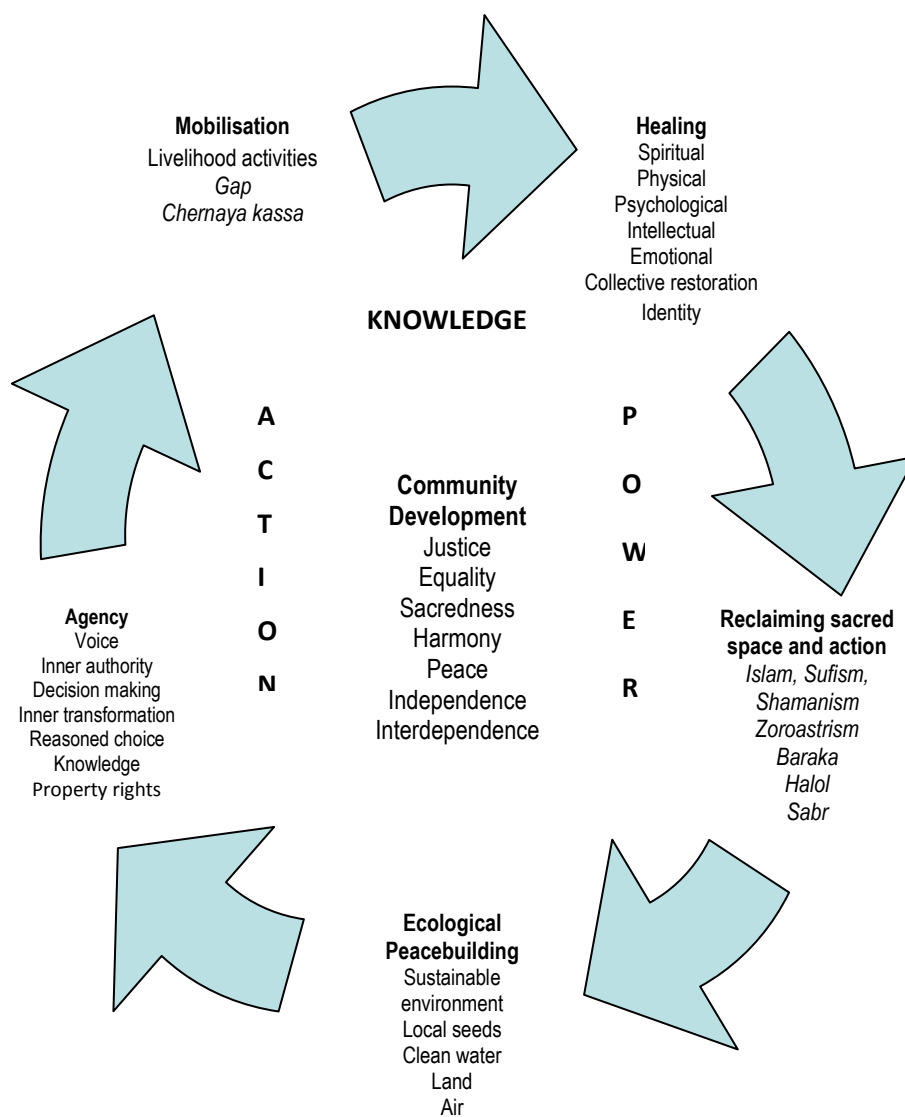
Lila Abu-Lughod's words suggests a broad definition of feminism which has a clear goal or required foundation in the remaking of women: "this inclusive or loose definition and the very exploration of the ways in which women have been targeted for reform in projects of social transformation as well as themselves seeking to change their status, lives, and societies, makes it impossible for us to forget that feminism always occurs in particular contexts, historical and social" (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p. 23). Women in the Tashkent *oblast* situated feminism in historical and social context similar to Lila Abu-Lughod's concept. However, they ascribed specific meaning to feminism indicating colonialism, cultural imperialism, and the Soviet project of emancipation of women. These women did not attribute their agency to imposed feminism and rejected my western knowledge and concepts of feminism that I used in my theoretical framework. Instead, women stressed their own sense of "cutting the knots" of patriarchy, taking action, and empowering themselves and their families financially and in terms of enhancing their social and symbolic capital.

Women's stories inform us about various women's efforts to change their own lives and statuses. Some women cope with existing conditions and act according to the agreed upon social norms without transforming gender roles. They acted to maximise their well-being through the wealth of their potential husbands or through having access to other male social networks. In contrast to these women, some women did not conform to gender norms and pursued their income generating activities. Yet, some of them felt discomfort with their new roles. However, they did take responsibility and embrace change to make their families better off.

Some women like traditional *otins* and healers are trying to change societies through their own authoritative knowledge of traditional Islam, an Islam which is also shaped by Zoroastrism, pre-Islamic religions and cults, Sufism, shamanism, animism, worship of ancestors, and the cult of nature (Navruz). In spite of different interpretations of Islam, I argue that Islam is a peace force for transforming communities and taking action against abuse, male ownership, and dominance. Hence, Islam moves forward the agenda of social justice, equality, and equity among individuals.

The findings of this research provide a multi-track approach to community development and governance built on (1) knowledge production; (2) healing and reclaiming sacred space and action; (3) livelihood mobilisation; (4) ecological peacebuilding; and (5) agency. This system of community development shows how women's agency, power, and knowledge can reorganise male dominated gendered space as an alternative to top-down women's emancipation projects. Women's discursive knowledge, inner authority, and agency help households move from poverty to multidimensional empowerment: spiritual, economic, social, cultural, human, financial, ecological, and psychological.

Figure 10. Community Development Model



Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations are vital for socio-economic and ecological development in Uzbekistan:

- (1) Ensure further employment in public and private sectors of the economy. The development of employment opportunities should be gender sensitive to decrease the gap in income earnings between men and women;

- (2) Develop small and medium enterprises in rural areas in Uzbekistan to overcome social and economic challenges;
- (3) Develop a holistic ecological peacebuilding paradigm of sustainable development with the focus on food, water, earth, air, and health – components of environmental justice. These environmental determinants are vital for livelihood's preservation and maintenance of water, land and other resources for healthy community development and environmental justice;
- (4) Ban foreign GMO seeds to eradicate the neo-colonial dependency of the country. Sustainable policies are vital to preserve and support local seed varieties and quality using locally based research institutions; and
- (5) Encourage media to promote environmental peacebuilding and justice.

Further Research

This research was built on my previous studies and employed a holistic systems approach by examining livelihood activities and socio-cultural changes located at micro and macro levels. My research is significant in giving insights into how women's access to resources and engagement in income-generating activities may lead to their empowerment and consequently, to change of power relations at the household and community levels. The healers, *otin oyis*, and other women are agents of social transformation who manoeuvre within constraints but also make strategic choices to improve their livelihoods and also enhance psychological, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Further research is needed to examine how social transformations are taking place in urban areas such as Tashkent city and regional capitals. Poverty is not limited to rural areas and little is known about how people cope with socio-economic changes in urban contexts. Understanding gender specifics of rural and urban livelihood in depth by examining empowerment and methods of

conflict resolutions women apply to solve conflicts over access to resources would help to develop appropriate development policies in Uzbekistan and Central Asia.

With international migration, many people from Central Asia and former Soviet Union countries live in Europe and North America. In my future work I would like to address critical issues about the ways immigrant communities empower themselves to deal with socio-economic challenges and constructive processes in their adjustment to the North American context. The study will be crucial in developing policies and designing programs to address socio-economic issues and the quality of life immigrants face in adjusting to a new socio-economic environment.

The condition of indigenous peoples in Uzbekistan has lots of similarities with people in northern communities in Canada. Further study is needed to address critical issues of livelihoods and food insecurity in Manitoba and analyse socio-economic challenges. The study is crucial in developing policies and designing programs to address socio-economic issues and the quality of life indigenous people face in adjusting to a new socio-economic environment.

More in-depth exploration of food security assessment and availability of community resources can help understand how the micro food systems are mediated by gender relations. This will provide a better understanding of gender implications in livelihood and empowerment analysis. This research can employ a holistic system approach by examining livelihood activities and socio-cultural changes located at micro and macro levels. Understanding how women manoeuvre within constraints but also make strategic choices to improve their livelihoods and also enhance psychological, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual well-being is crucial for livelihood and food security analysis. The study will enrich feminist and development studies by

exploring ways communities can redefine their identity, power and status to build peace and justice in communities.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Adat</i>	Customary law more widespread among nomads than sedentary people.
<i>Agronom</i>	Agricultural worker trained in Soviet and post-Soviet universities specializing in scientific agricultural knowledge.
<i>Beshik to 'y</i>	Celebration for the birth of a child.
<i>Bosmachi</i>	A Turkestanti anti-Soviet guerrilla movement that existed between 1918 and the 1930s. These groups were led by <i>qo'rboshi</i> , generals. The groups were divided by and were overthrown by Russians. Russians labeled these anti-colonial groups as “bandits” or “rebels.”
<i>Brigade</i>	A labour production team in a <i>kolkhoz</i> during Soviet times. It also refers to the particular unit of land supervised by the <i>brigadir</i> (Russ., chief of brigade).
<i>Chernaya kassa</i>	Local rotating savings network where each member pays a portion of her or his salary each month and takes turns to draw lump-sum contribution.
<i>Dasturhon</i>	Laid out table.
<i>Dehqon</i>	Peasant who leases the land from a farmer.
<i>Dehqonchilik</i>	Agricultural work.
<i>Fermer</i>	A private farmer who leases land for 10-50 years. The minimum area of leased land is 10 hectares. After Independence, farmers continue to fulfill state-ordered crops such as cotton, wheat, meat, and dairy products.
<i>Gap</i>	Indigenous social rotating and economic savings network of women or men.
<i>Halol</i>	A proper life style.
<i>Hashar</i>	Voluntary community labour, usually provided by all people regardless of their wealth. It is normally men who participate in <i>hashar</i> , for example, to build a house, clean streets, dig <i>ariks</i> (ditches), or do any other community work. Hashar is used when discussing men's jobs, but is not used for the kinds of voluntary community work women do, like cooking for life cycle events.
<i>Hovli</i>	Courtyard.
<i>Hujum</i>	Attack or assault. The Soviet campaign was aimed to liberate and emancipate women in Central Asia and Azerbaijan from traditions. The campaign to unveil women began in 1927 and lasted until the 1930s.
<i>Ihson</i>	A ceremony to honour Allah and to make special requests in order to receive blessings. <i>Ihson</i> is an event to honour people who have died, and is carried out after a funeral.

<i>Ichkari</i>	The women's part of the house, located around the inner courtyard.
<i>Ichki kuyov</i>	An internal husband. A husband who lives in his wife's parents' house instead of his own house.
<i>Ijtihad</i>	In Islamic legal thought, to exercise <i>ijtihad</i> is to apply reasoning to interpretation of the sources.
<i>Isiriq</i>	Traditional herbs used for smudging. The herbs are burned, and the smoke drives out bad smells and bad spirits.
<i>Jadid</i>	A local movement of Muslim intelligentsia in Central Asia in the late 19 th and beginning of the 20 th centuries to emancipate women, and modernize Islam by setting western educational standards in schools.
<i>Kelin</i>	Daughter-in-law. Young people address a <i>kelin</i> not by name but by relationship. They refer to her as <i>kenai</i> . Older people address a <i>kelin</i> by her name. <i>Kelin</i> can be also <i>ovsun</i> (sister-in-law) to her husband's brother's wife.
<i>Khariya</i>	<i>Khariya</i> is financial assistance to the needy provided by wealthy women and men.
<i>Khoja</i>	Some Sufi leaders were called <i>khoja</i> , <i>ishan</i> , <i>sheikh</i> , or <i>pir</i> . They performed a vital role as advisers to rulers, especially during the Timurid reign.
<i>Kishlok</i>	Village.
<i>Kolkhoz</i>	Collective farm during the Soviet period.
<i>Ko'rpacha</i>	Traditional Uzbek quilt which has two layers stuffed with cotton.
<i>Madrassa</i>	Muslim religious school.
<i>Mahalla or elot</i>	Administrative and territorial division of the village or city. In Uzbekistan this unit in Uzbek is usually referred as <i>mahalla</i> in official documents. In the dialect of Khorezm Uzbek, the unit is called <i>elot</i> .
<i>Mardikor</i>	Casual or daily labourer.
<i>Maslahats</i>	Islamic didactic stories that help people to solve issues in family and social life.
<i>Mavlud</i>	A commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.
<i>Mulla or imam</i>	Male religious clergy leader who delivers prayers in mosques and life cycle ceremonies.
<i>Oblast' or viloyat</i>	Administrative and territorial divisions of the country. Uzbekistan is divided into 12 regions: Andijan, Ferghana, Bukhara, Djizak, Khorezm, Namangan, Navoi, Kashkadarya, Samarkand, Sirdarya, Surkhandarya, Tashkent (also as a separate administrative unit), and includes the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakistan.

<i>Ogorod</i>	A small piece of arable and irrigated land inside the courtyard in rural areas in Uzbekistan (Russian).
<i>Otin</i>	A religious teacher who teaches Qur'anic classes to girls and women. The otin is also a religious leader who holds ceremonies in Muslim female gatherings.
<i>Potaha</i>	A blessing.
<i>Pudrat</i>	Sharecropping contract of a farmer with a person who grows cotton, wheat, rice.
<i>Qazi</i>	Islamic judge educated in the madrasa to interpret Sharia law.
<i>Qo'rboshi</i>	The leader of the anti-Soviet colonial movement. The Bolsheviks called them the <i>bosmachi</i> , bandits.
<i>Ro'mol</i>	A square scarf worn to cover the head, folded in the middle into a triangle shape. It is tied at the back.
<i>Savob</i>	A blessing. Reward from Allah.
<i>Shariat</i>	Islamic religious law.
<i>Shirkat</i>	Agricultural cooperative introduced after the dismantlement of <i>kolkhozes</i> in 1990s.
<i>Sotik, pl.sotka</i>	One hundredth of a hectare.
<i>Tasbih</i>	prayer beads.
<i>Tomorka</i>	Private plot of land for agricultural activities with 0.12 ha.
<i>Tubeteika/do'ppi</i>	A traditional Uzbek cap.
<i>Usma</i>	A local herb that women grow in their gardens, collect, roll in their hands, squeeze to take juice out, and put on their eyebrows as a cosmetic.
<i>Waqf</i>	Property endowed to mosques, hospitals, schools, or other institutions. These endowments helped to alleviate financial burden and served as a tax break for the holder.
<i>Zhenotdel</i>	Women's department of Community Party groups.
<i>Zikr</i>	Sufi ritual to honour God with prayers, litanies, and poetry.

APPENDIX -1

Figure 11. Story. The Year of the Elephant

This story took place after the events of the battle with the Elephants. Habashiston (Ethiopia) conquered Yemen, and the Habashiston's king appointed Abraha al Ashram to rule Yemen on his behalf. Abraha like others was Christian. Abraha built a glorious cathedral and named it Alqalis. Abraha wanted to turn away from Kaaba so that they will come to his cathedral. Because his efforts did not succeed, he decided to take it force. By destroying Kaaba, he wanted to turn all people into his faith. With this purpose he hired lots of soldiers, bought lots of necessary things for a battle, and lots of elephants to scare Arabs and went to Mecca. Without any difficulties he passed the city of Taif, and stopped at the place called Al-Miglas which is located on the way to Mecca. He sent a messenger to Mecca to call for a chief. The chief, Abdumutallab, was brought by the messenger. Abdumutallab was high, well-built, visible, and a responsible person.

When Abraha saw Abdumutallab, he was quite impressed with him and got up from his chair to greet Abdumutallab. Abraha sat down on the carpet next to him, so they could talk as equals. Abraha requested his interpreter to ask Abdumutallab if he had wished to ask something. Abdumutallab said that he wanted his two hundred soldiers to take two hundreds camels back. Abraha told the interpreter that he was so impressed with him when he saw him coming.

However, I am so disappointed that you, such a great man is asking your 200 camels back instead of thinking about my intention to destroy Kaaba that was built by grandparents and older generations. Abdumutallab said: "I am the lord of camels, and similarly the Kaaba has a Lord Who Will Defend it."

Abraha said that God cannot defend against him. "Do what you think." said Abdumutallab. Abraha gave Abdumutallab his camels. Abdumutallab went back to Mecca and ordered all the people to leave the city and move to the mountains. After that he and several people went to the Kaaba and prayed to God for help. He grabbed the metal ring of the Kaaba and asked God to protect his house. Then they left for the mountains too.

The next day Abraha gathered his brave elephants and started conquering Mecca. However, the elephants sat down and did not get up. When they moved to other directions, the elephants went fast. And when they moved towards Mecca, the elephants lay down. At this time with God's will, many flocks of birds flew and started throwing stones on the enemies. As soon as the stones touched a soldier, he died immediately. The soldiers were destroyed. Abraha was harmed too because he was hit by stone. The soldiers who survived lifted Abraha and took him to Sana [*to Yemen*]. He died in Yemen and was buried there [*Fil surasi, Qur'an 105:5*].

The will of God is very strong and everything happened because of God's will. The elephants did not move because of God's will. If someone goes against God's will, the consequences will be like in this story.

Figure 12. A Poem Dedicated to Mothers

...	...
<i>To 'y qilaman deb, bel tukkan</i>	To conduct a wedding,
<i>Kelinga sarpo yiqqan</i>	She collected a <i>sarpo</i> ³²⁴ for a bride
<i>Kam ko 'stiga joninni teggan</i>	In times of hardships endures pain in her soul
<i>Joni temir onalar</i>	Mothers with iron soul
<i>Darmon bo 'lsin yeganim</i>	I have blessed the food
<i>Duhobadan kiyganim</i>	I've sewn clothing from velvet
<i>Mevalar ham suyganim</i>	I've cut fruits
<i>Suygan degan okilonalar</i>	I've done everything to care
<i>Tosh kelganda kemirgan</i>	When stone came, strengthened
<i>Suv kelganda simirgan</i>	When water came, soaked it
<i>Dini Islomda bergan</i>	Mothers of Islam
<i>Itoatkor onalar</i>	Patient mothers
<i>Ketsa ham darmoni</i>	Even when she is sick
<i>Qo 'llarda bor Qur 'oni</i>	She holds the Qur'an in her hands
<i>Dillardadir iymoni</i>	In her soul is faith
<i>Iymoni bor onalar</i>	Mothers with faith
<i>Er izidan chiqmagan</i>	She never diverges from her husband's path
<i>Yemishga hech bitmagan</i>	And never ceases to feed him
<i>Bir qattiq so 'z aytmagan</i>	Did not say a rude word
<i>Yumshoqqina onalar</i>	Soft mothers
<i>Bolasini sog 'ingan</i>	Missed her children
<i>Kunlar sanab ovungan</i>	Counted the days
<i>Keldingmi deb, tanigan</i>	Did you come, she asked
<i>Bolasini ayagan</i>	Protected children
<i>Sog 'ligini so 'ragan</i>	Asked their health
<i>Yuz ko 'zini asragan</i>	Saved her face
<i>Shirin so 'zli onalar</i>	Mothers with sweet words
<i>Bolasini ko 'rganda</i>	When she met her child
<i>Bir og 'iz so 'z deganda</i>	When an unnecessary [<i>hurtful</i>] word was
<i>So 'zi erda qolganda</i>	spoken
<i>Indamagan onalar</i>	The word falls to the ground
	And the mother remains silent
<i>Ish qilib charchamagan</i>	She was not tired working hard
<i>Ko 'nglini g 'ashlamagan</i>	Did not give up
<i>Ko 'zini yoshlamagan</i>	Did not cry
<i>Andishali onalar</i>	Mothers with virtues
<i>Yo 'qdan borni yaratgan</i>	She used whatever she found
<i>Dasturhonlar tuzagan</i>	Laid the <i>dasturhon</i> [<i>table</i>]
<i>Mehmonlarni kuzatgan</i>	Accepted guests
<i>Qo 'li ochiq onalar</i>	Open hearted mothers

³²⁴ *Sarpo* is the collection of gifts (clothes, trousseau items) given to the bride and groom.

Dardin ichiga yutgan
Doimo mehr kutgan
Mehriga to'ymay o'tgan
Mehrga zor onalar
Holini sezdirmagan
Sirini hech kimga bildirmagan
Uyini kadiragan
Sadoqatli onalar
Tunu kun duo qilgan
Jonini fido qilgan
...
Omon bo'lsin onalar
Hizmat qilsin bolalar
Kelajakda qilganini olaversin
bolalar
Kelajakda kilganini olaversin
bolalar

Swallowed hardships
Waited always for love
Mothers did not receive love
Short of love mothers
Never told about health
Did not tell secrets to anyone
Valued their house
Patient mothers
Blessed the day
Sacrificed themselves
...
Let mothers be blessed
Let children be of service to parents
Let them do what children can benefit from
Let them do what children can benefit from

Figure 13. A Poem Dedicated to a Woman Who Selects a Bride for her Son

<i>Yolg'izgina o'gli bor ayol Shirin shirin so'zlab turasiz ayol Birgalikda bir gap aytaylik Kelmasin malol Yana kelin tanlaganda also adashmasin</i>	The woman has only one son The sweet sweet words you say Let me say once Without hesitation This time do not be mistaken when you select a bride
<i>Shuristirasiz kim onasi Ozodami hayri honasi Ichidadir odam olasi Kelin tanlaganda also adashmang</i>	You ask who is her mother And where she lives She is someone's child Do not be mistaken when you select a bride
<i>Demang go'zal qo'g'irchoq bo'lsin O'gilchamga ovunchoq bo'lsin Hayot emas o'yinchoq o'yin Kelin tanlaganda hech adashmang</i>	Let her be beautiful like a doll Let her be son to your son The life is not a toy Do not be mistaken when you select a bride
<i>O'g'lingizga najot bo'lsin u Kishi emas, kanot bo'lsin u Dono bo'lsin siz topgan suluv Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i>	Let her be a guidance to your son Let her be not a person, but a wing Let her be bright [dono] Do not be mistaken when you select a bride
<i>Agar bo'lsa molfarast, nodon Rashkchi, betgachopar dargumon Yilingizga yuniti maykon Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i>	And if she is bad Gossiper, who spread rumors Do not wish her to your son Do not be mistaken when you select a bride
<i>Bolangizni bor qilgan ham shu Yo'ki horu-zor qilgan ham shu kelin Nozik, ammo buyuk kuchdir u Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i>	She is the one who can make your child prosper She can also make him poor She is fragile, but possess enormous power Do not be mistaken when you select a bride
<i>Darahtni silkitsangiz yog'ar qiz Qaysi tillo, qaysi biri mis O'g'il turib adahsa ham siz Kelin tanlaganda siz adashmang</i>	If you shake a tree, you can have girls Which of them is gold, which of them is silver? If you gave birth to a son by mistake Do not be mistaken when you select a bride

<p><i>Bo 'lsa qo 'li shirin, mehribon</i> <i>Shu qo 'llardan yeysiz oshu-non</i> <i>Balki shu qo 'lda berarsiz jon</i> <i>Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i></p>	<p>If a bride is sweet, respectful You eat from her hands And you may die in her arms Do not be mistaken when you select a bride</p>
<p><i>Yaqin qilar yirog 'ingizni</i> <i>Kutar do 'stu o 'rtog 'ingizni</i> <i>[Read to us too; someone from the</i> <i>audience. Laughter]</i> <i>Shu qiz yoqar chirog 'ingizni</i> <i>Mana shu uyni shu kelin yoqar</i> <i>Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i></p>	<p>She makes your friends closer She has guest over <i>[Read to us too; someone from the</i> <i>audience. Laughter]</i> She is the one who lightens your house The bride lightens this house Do not be mistaken when you select a bride</p>
<p><i>Qay qizniki, odobi bordur</i> <i>Qalbi nur, oftobi bor dur</i> <i>Kerak busa tinchlik, baht huzur</i> <i>Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i></p>	<p>She has decent manners An open heart and good manners Peace and happiness are important Do not be mistaken when you select a bride</p>
<p><i>Yomon kelin misoli ilon</i> <i>Urishtirar o 'g 'lingiz bilan</i> <i>Jigarlardan ulmai berdim</i> <i>Opa-singillarini olmay qo 'yar tan</i> <i>Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i></p>	<p>A bad bride with intentions of a snake Makes you fight with your son Does not respect relatives Criticize sisters Do not be mistaken when you select a bride</p>
<p><i>El ichida gapingiz chiqar</i> <i>[Otin: i.e., she is a spy, Laughter]</i> <i>Qudalar oldida tiniqib qolmang</i> <i>Kolmang bir baloga yoliqib</i> <i>Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i></p>	<p>The conversations may appear <i>[Otin: In the language of a spy,</i> <i>Laughter]</i> Do not lose your face in front of your parents-in-law Do not get into trouble Do not be mistaken when you select a bride</p>
<p><i>Yolg 'iz kelin og 'riqdir boshga</i> <i>Bosh urasiz kaysi bir toshga</i> <i>Qila olmaysiz yo 'lini boshqa</i> <i>Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i></p>	<p>The only bride can cause a headache You beat your head on some stone You cannot change her Do not be mistaken when you select a bride</p>
<p><i>Yaxshi bo 'lsa, podshoh bulasiz</i> <i>Yomon bo 'lsa, rasvo bo 'lasiz</i> <i>Qon bosim bo 'lganda ado bo 'lasiz</i> <i>[Laughter]</i> <i>Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang</i> <i>[Audience: Let her be with insof]</i></p>	<p>If she is good, you become a king If she is bad, you turn into dirt If you have blood pressure, you die <i>[Laughter]</i> Do not be mistaken when you select a bride <i>[Audience: Let her be with</i></p>

consciousness]

*Hayron bo'lmang do'stlarim aslo
Agar ular bulsiz marhabo
Qabrda ham chikar tovushi
Kelin tanlaganda hech amadashmang*

Do not surprised dear friends
If they are not kind
Even in the grave her voice comes
Do not be mistaken when you select a
bride

Figure 14. Picture of Dutch Cauliflower Seeds Planted in *ogorod*



Photo: Zulfiya Tursunova

Figure 15. Picture of a Mavlud Ceremony



Photo: Zulfiya Tursunova

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