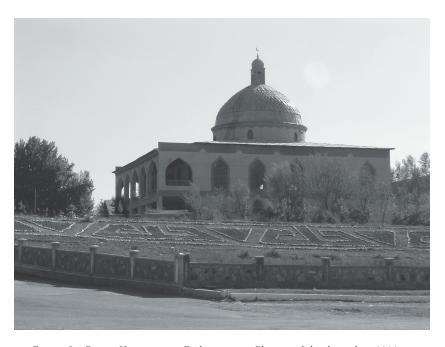# INTRODUCTION

The main roadway leading to Bazaar-Korgon, Kyrgyzstan, follows a most unflattering route. Capitalism's failures flash by the window first—a defunct joint venture cotton-processing plant to the right, to the left a row of houses, their crumbling accouterments exposing shoddy quality. Next, the decay of Soviet progress unrolls before the eye—dilapidated government buildings, rundown apartment blocks in desertlike surroundings, a public park yellow with brittle vegetation, and empty concrete casks that were once a fountain. The road widens as it enters the town square and nears the main market and bus station. Flanking the square, two objects come into view: a statue of Lenin and a mosque.

Lenin stands to the right against a backdrop of mountains. His outstretched arm strongly calls the viewer's attention upward and forward. In the 1980s, it literally guided the viewer's eye across the square to the newly built district government offices, indicating the fruition of local development projects and the seat of local power. It likewise called the viewer's mind to thoughts of a larger collective and its communal fantasy. The figure of Lenin was intended to inspire visions of an imminent future of unparalleled modernization—an imagined communist utopia. This future included universal atheism, the ultimate goal in this particularly virulent project of Soviet secularism. More complicated than that, the

FIGURE I.3. Bazaar-Korgon rayon Friday mosque. Photograph by the author, 2009.

FIGURE I.4. Taxi drivers waiting for work. Photograph by the author, 2004.

statue simultaneously called to mind much larger, more tangled webs of hopes and failures, power and control.

Although the Red Banner of the Soviet Union is gone, the government offices remain, now marked by the emblem of the independent Kyrgyz republic—a white hawk on a backdrop of blue. But the building shares its favored position with a teahouse and a mosque; the viewer's eye no longer effortlessly toggles between the symbols of socialist hopes and the enactment of socialist power. The view is now interrupted by what forms the focal point of the skyline—the mosque. Remarkable in size and position, if not in beauty, the mosque juts from the last bit of hill before the square narrows into the dead end that marks the eastern edge of the town's bazaar. The mosque, built in the 1990s, directs the viewer's attention to nothing but itself. Its impression lies only in its size and its mass, which some have likened to a fortress. The mosque started as a community initiative in a new political environment, one that created and signaled the townsfolk's self-understanding as Muslims. Freedom of conscience, newly privatized land, and private donors made building the mosque possible and through its construction a sense of development and progress—the promise of capitalism—emerged. The project marked Bazaar-Korgonians' first move in a new institutional arrangement and indicated the town's growing fluency in new arenas, providing hope for what they imagined would be a successful "transition" to capitalist democracy.

Just beyond the town square, girls sell bubble gum at makeshift roadside stalls, dozens of out-of-work men peddle their driving skills for next to nothing, old men rest next to donkey carts and chat with one another. A close look reveals outhouses in the lots next to the government building, chips of marble from Lenin's platform, and trash blowing around the park. The fountain's water stopped flowing long ago. Townsfolk queue outside government offices, waiting for the chance to genuflect for the paltry funds and the little influence the district leaders can still arrange. These, too, are symbols of projects imprinted on Bazaar-Korgon, projects gone awry amid false intentions, hidden power, poor planning, misconceptions, and just dumb stupid luck.

Despite their presence, neither the people nor the peripheral decay draws the eye. Lenin and the mosque retain that role, but they suggest a startling fact: the mosque construction did not seem to necessitate the removal of Lenin's image.[1] The two stand together well into the twenty-first century. They neither precede nor follow one another in the way teleological narratives sketched their ideological and material regimes—atheism and Islam, socialism and capitalist democracy. The synchronic presence of Lenin and the mosque creates a difficult terrain to interpret. Residents' reflections on the scene and the political and economic environments it represents reveal a complex, contradictory evaluation in which

there is no clear winner. This book is concerned precisely with how this complex, sometimes contradictory landscape of religion and politics came to be, why it was so variously interpreted by Bazaar-Korgonians, and what together this says about secularism.

Based on fourteen months of fieldwork conducted in 2003 and 2004, this book examines the way in which Bazaar-Korgonians constructed a post-Soviet religious landscape as they moved from socialism, with its state-enforced atheism, centrally planned economy, and limited access to ideas, goods, and people beyond socialist borders, to its current state of capitalist democracy, liberal secularism, and globalization. It looks at the clothes Bazaar-Korgonians wore, the buildings they constructed, the way they married, and what they watched on TV in order to find out how they were constructing themselves as Muslims and—through their diverse opinions and in conversations with one another—what they (variously) made and understood Islam to be. It charts how Bazaar-Korgonians began labeling those who were "interested in Islam" or those who might be "terrorists" or "Wahhabis" and how these labels and notions related to regional, state, and global discourses on religion and extremism, past and present. In short, it looks at how all Bazaar-Korgonians—regardless of whether or not they veiled, prayed, abstained from alcohol, or visited a shrine—created, lived, and evaluated religion and debated what it meant to be a Muslim in a post-Soviet, Muslim context.

Religious life in Bazaar-Korgon in the early 2000s was public in a way that was impossible in the late Soviet period. The flourishing of religion was consistent with many of the piety movements being described at that moment by anthropologists around the world, though with notable differences, as this book details.[2] Regardless of whether and how the townspeople imaged and followed Islam, religion, as well as the freedom to practice it, was nearly universally lauded among my interlocutors in Bazaar-Korgon. In fact, freedom of religion remained one of the most popular aspects of the post-Soviet period in Kyrgyzstan, even while disappointment with democratization and the transition to capitalism had already become a normal part of everyday life.[3]

By the 2000s, Bazaar-Korgon had become known throughout Kyrgyzstan as a place where something was happening with Islam. The public space of the new political order had created room for Bazaar-Korgonians to live Islam in locally novel ways. Those "interested in Islam" (*dinge kyzyktuu bölüp kaluu*) or those who had "turned and gone to Islam" (*dinge burulup getkin*) sought out local religious teachers to instruct them in Quranic recitation and proper ritual performance or began to "call others to Islam." Women, but also some men, changed their mode of dress to fit what they perceived to be proper and modest for Muslims. Some began eschewing certain rituals and modifying others to make them more pure
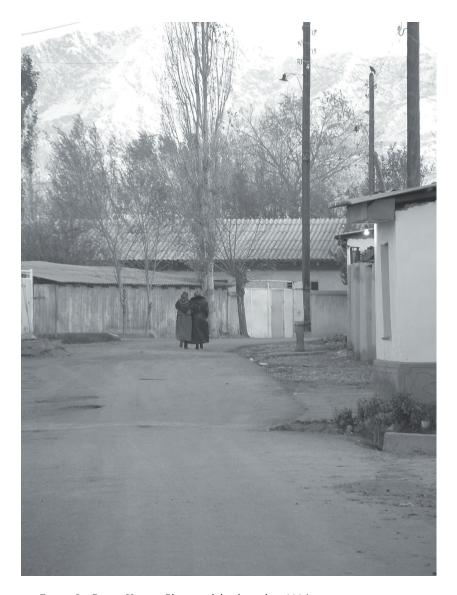
Figure I.5. Bazaar-Korgon. Photograph by the author, 2004.

and Islamic. Debate ensued about what proper Muslimness (*muslumanchylyk*) should be.

At the same time, however, many, if not most, residents also expressed a sense of discomfort with particular interpretations of Islam being publicly articulated in town. These formulations emphasized a notion of Muslimness that differed

from the widespread and dominant one of the late Soviet period. The public Islam gaining ground in the 2000s challenged established notions that Muslimness was a matter of collective, ethno-religious belonging. Locally new discourses insisted rather that "Muslim" was primarily, if not exclusively, a category of belief. The notions and practices that most residents asserted to be an inherent part of Muslimness were not accepted as religion in these formulations. This challenge forced many Muslims in Bazaar-Korgon to rethink their Muslimness. This was often troubling.

The central argument of this book is that the unease felt by the majority of townsfolk was not only about specific ideas of Muslimness. It was equally about the broader, underlying notion of religion implicated in the new interpretations of Islam in town. The conception of religion held by the majority of Bazaar-Korgonians differed significantly from the locally new variants circulating in the region—ideas that premised the notion of belief and conviction.[4] Their ideas about religion had more to do with collective belonging, and they had been cast by the modernizing campaigns of the Soviet Union and its political project of secularism.

The power and authority of a modern, secular state, Talal Asad (2003) argues, emerge in part from the state's control over the definition and place of religion; it therefore perpetually monitors and regulates these qualities, limiting the concept of religion to that of internal belief. While Asad and those building on his work are often careful to indicate that this is a notion of a liberal, secular state, the analyses rarely address the liberal/nonliberal distinction and its implications. The first wave of literature on secularism was, for example, far more concerned with discussions of religion and the secular in light of one another. As a result, a certain fluency and care in interrogations of these concepts vis-à-vis each other developed, but, as Charles Hirschkind (2011) has pointed out, there is considerably less precision in the use of the term "secular" as it relates to the notions "modern" and "liberal." Hirschkind is concerned with ferreting out the differences between what is secular and what is modern in his investigation of the secular body. In contrast, I examine a secular definition of religion to explain the secular as a concept distinct from the liberal.

I suggest that what we have taken to be the modern secular definition of religion is merely its liberal secular variant, produced by states dominantly operating in this register. The Soviet Union, whose political economy was distinct from, though certainly bound up with, liberal traditions, had logics that produced and were predicated on alternative ideas and practices of society, polity, economy, subjects, the secular, and—not surprisingly—religion. These logics had much less to do with "internal belief," individualism, markets, and subjects supposedly free from intervention and much more with interpersonal affiliations, organized

collective action, and the alteration of structure and generative action to transform the subject or society.

My assertion is that religion as internal belief is a particular form of religion suited to a secular, liberal logic. But the shape of religion would necessarily differ in a modern state constructed through congruent but alternative scripts. Religion in the Soviet Union is one such case. The Soviet atheism campaigns—a particularly virulent version of secularism—have largely been viewed only as an attempt to eradicate religion, rather than examined for what they, however inadvertently, sustained, altered, and created.[5] Yet, the attack itself was the work of definition. It presupposed an idea of religion—the thing that would be attacked—or at least the idea of an unacceptable, backward, threatening religion. These attacks delineated certain elements often bound up with Islam and Muslims and therefore, presumably, with religion by condemning and outlawing them. They were vilified and delegitimized—labeled as antiquated, violent, or false.

At the same time, other state policies and practices inadvertently nurtured another notion and practice of religion. Religion in this way was allowed, ignored, or promoted. In Central Asia, both a space for and an idea of religion emerged, for example, as part of an inchoate national identity. Acceptable religion became increasingly tied to home-based practices and life-cycle events where it was consciously ignored, unwittingly missed, or tacitly tolerated by local and distant state authorities (e.g., Abashin 2014; Rasanayagam 2011; Hilgers 2009; Kehl-Bodrogi 2006). Religion thusly defined and practiced was cultivated and validated by the state in part through efforts like the nationalities policies (*korenizatsiya*). Religion became wrapped up with national forms of belonging, and the performance of this ethno-religious national identity became necessary to gain access to power, resources, and advantages. Religion in this way—religion as belonging—was a functioning public category; in this manner and in these spaces it did not threaten the state's authority or the rationale of its existence. Rather, religion thusly understood and enacted emerged in tandem with Soviet secularism as an intertwining of several policies, measures, and visions; this notion of religion was necessary for the power and being of the Soviet secular state.

The Soviet Union was an instance of nonliberal secularism; understanding and comparing it to Western variants helps illuminate that which is secular (and/or modern) as opposed to that which is liberal. My argument is that the notion of interiorized belief of the individual as the inherent characteristic of modern secularized religion is merely its liberal, Western variant. It is a conceptualization and enactment that fits liberal logics and the exercise of Western power as it unfolded historically. Soviet modernization followed another course, one that from the outset was more oriented to interpersonal affiliation and organization.[6] Its vision of the secular and the notion of religion it created necessarily fit these

contours; they were co-constituted in the same historically evolving conversation. But they also played on preexisting ideas of religion—as they existed in the Russian Empire and its encounter in its borderlands, including Muslims in Central Asia—thus picking up another side of religion disregarded or ignored in liberal modern projects: religion as a mode of belonging.

When, in the post-Soviet period, other notions of religion were given more space to circulate and flourish in the region, they challenged this widespread, Soviet-era notion of religion. In Bazaar-Korgon this meant that many townsfolk were being challenged not only about specific ideas or practices of Islam but also about the nature of Muslimness and therefore implicitly, the nature of religion. In this way I chart my interlocutors' struggle as one in which they were being challenged to move from a Soviet-era definition of religion (which was essentially about belonging) to a liberal one (in which belief was the necessary condition), hence a shift from belonging to belief.

Belonging, Belief, and Secularism

To use the words *belonging* and *belief* in the title of a book on religion and secularism is to immediately call to mind the influential work of the sociologist Grace Davie on religion in Britain and the two pieces whose titles contained the phrase "believing without belonging" (Davie 1990, 1994). The question around which Davie (1994, 2) framed her work was why "the majority of British people—in common with many other Europeans—persist in believing (if only in an ordinary God), but see no need to participate with an even minimal regularity in their religious institutions." Davie was essentially wrestling with the question of religion's presence in the modern world, a fact that presented a problem for many sociologists because the secularization thesis had predicted religion's demise. The "believing but not belonging" British, and the particularities of their persistent faith, were only one element of the conundrum. The public return of religion in the 1980s—in the American Moral Majority, the Iranian Revolution, Indian nationalism, the Polish Solidarity movement—troubled the secularization thesis, as well as its proponents, more profoundly. Peter Berger (1999, 2) assessed this situation and declared that "the assumption that we live in a secularized world is wrong" and that the body of work "loosely labeled 'secularization theory' is essentially mistaken." Other sociologists, notably José Casanova (1994), wondered if instead the secularization thesis should be revisited and re-evaluated, rather than dismissed. Instead of a unitary notion, he argued, the thesis had three core ideas. The presence of public religion troubled only the predicted decline and privatization of religion. The thesis of differentiation—the idea that religion, politics, economics, society, and so forth, became disentangled, differentiated, and increasingly autonomous spheres in the modern era—could still be upheld, he argued.

Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1990) too called for rethinking secularization and began framing her work not around secularism per se but about how "religion organizes itself" in the condition of modernity, and she did so by decoupling secularization and modernity. Religion was a "chain of memory," and many modern Europeans were to be understood as amnesiacs (2000). By 2006, she was examining "high modernity" in Europe and arguing that in "religious modernity" in Europe there was a "dual tendency" toward "the individualization and subjectivization of beliefs on one hand, and deregulation of the organized systems of religious belief, on the other" (2006, 60). In contrast to Hervieu-Léger, Casanova (1994) argued for the very public role of religion, moving away from the individualization and, somehow by implication, the private religion at the center of Hervieu-Léger's 2006 argument. This is perhaps because Casanova's focus was wider, examining the United States, Poland, and Spain, for example—countries that in one typology or another had long been seen as exceptions or variations on the (northern or western) European rule.

What was perhaps common to all their work, including that of Davie and the influential David Martin, was a re-evaluating of the role of Europe as a model of and for secularization in modern societies; it became instead merely a historical option. Modernity, for these sociologists, could lead to secularization, as in Europe, but it might also include religion that would be molded and shaped to its particular form. Berger (2006, 153), for example, argued that secularization was not a necessary corollary of modernity, but that pluralism "of worldviews, values, etc., including religion, very likely was."

Casanova's work played an early and influential role in my own thinking about secularization and religion. Despite my forays into the literature, however, it never formed a central part of my approach. His influential book specifically, and the sociologists' vast work on religion and secularization more generally, never proved as fruitful as I had hoped for interpreting the (post) Soviet religious landscape of Kyrgyzstan. Davie's impressive corpus was no different. Thus, despite the similarity in title, my book is not meant to reflect Davie's work nor does it draw on her central argument to make its own. This is in part because underlying Davie's analysis, and much of the sociological literature, is a bias that limits its use in analyzing religion and secularism outside of Europe, a critique lobbed as early as 1965 by David Martin, the eminent sociologist of secularization. He argued that secularization as a concept was faulty, because, among other issues, it had "roots in rationalist and historicist ideology" (Martin 2005, chap. 10).

Martin's critique and injunctions are extremely insightful, and an approach similar to his shapes this book, though I came to it by way of the anthropologist Talal Asad. Asad's influential work on the secular was predated and undergirded by his genealogy of religion, including his evaluation (Asad 1993, 27–54) of

fellow anthropologist Clifford Geertz's (1973) universal definition of religion. It is there that his argument converges with Martin and his criticisms of theories of secularization. Asad argued that instead of the catholic description Geertz intended, the famed scholar had produced a parochial one. Geertz's definition, Asad (1993, 43) asserted, was a historically specific description crafted from within a Western "modern landscape of power and knowledge." It was situated in a contemporary notion of the secular that emerged from a postreformist, Protestant tradition of Christianity as it had developed in tandem with modern forms of the state, knowledge, the market, and the subject. Geertz's definition was, Asad (1993, 47) contended, one rooted in an idea of religion as individual, internalized belief in which belief was a "state of mind" rather than, for example, a "constituting activity in the world." It was, in short, not universal; it was a modern, secular definition par excellence.

In deconstructing Geertz's definition, Asad illustrated the located nature of social science understandings of religion.[7] The definition of religion we are most given to work with is not universal but rather that postreformist, secular conception that Asad identified in Geertz's work, one also seen throughout the sociological literature, as argued by David Martin (2007), and the anthropological literature, as indicated by Chris Hann (2012). Martin (2007, 144) argued, for example, that "the master-narrative favored by sociology has privileged the individualizing potential and inner-worldly asceticism of Protestantism," a view that needs to be reformulated, he argued, by paying attention to critiques coming from Catholicism, Anglo-Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Evangelical Protestantism. Hann (2012) and Hann and Hermann Goltz (2010) argue similarly; their alternative analysis is informed by studies of the Orthodox Church and, importantly, of religion in former socialist states. The bias identified by Asad, Martin, Hann, and Goltz is precisely one of the reasons that observations and analyses made by the sociologists of religion discussed above lack analytical purchase in postsocialist regions where Islam and Orthodoxy (not to mention others) were the religions that shaped the secular and projects of secularism. But this is only the start, for not only are there different religious traditions in these regions, but these regions have also have strikingly different (histories of) political economy than western Europe. Thus, the sociological notions neither mesh with the specific conceptions, practices, and institutions of the religions in question nor do they fit the political and economic histories of the region, including their particular projects of secularism and notions of the secular with which they are bound up.

Much of the recent work on contemporary secularisms, largely though not exclusively in anthropology, in contrast has shown the ways each specific project of secularism is bound up with particular religions, histories, and political economies; what kind of subjectivities and sensorial experiences each secularism

produces; how secularism is created, negotiated, and contested; how it functions as a mode of power, problem space, or political medium; and, importantly, how religion and the secular are tangled and interwoven.[8] This subfield has flourished and produced rich empirical and theoretical insights. As James Bielo (2015, 119) has argued in a review article of influential interdisciplinary publications, "secular studies has come of age."[9] Yet there is, he asserts, nonetheless a noticeable bias in the corpus to date—namely, the consideration of a narrow range of state secularisms, with the former socialist world being a notable exception.

It is only relatively recently that researchers have begun to delve into the specificities of Soviet secularism (e.g., Luehrmann 2011; Smolkin-Rothrock 2010; Wanner 2012). Here a significantly different political, economic, philosophical, and religious history shaped a particular political project of secularism and all the ideas, practices, objects, and institutions bound up with it. Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock (2010, 1) seems to question the secularity of the Soviet Union, arguing that in the postwar period those involved in Soviet atheism campaigns began to cultivate a "Soviet spirituality" they thought was needed to "fill the 'sacred space' made empty by the regime's war against religion." Catherine Wanner and Sonja Luehrmann both implicitly contest Smolkin-Rothrock's approach. Wanner (2012), for example, eschews dialectics of enchantment as a means of studying religion and secularism in the Soviet Union. Taking an Asad-inspired approach, she argues that secularism is, in essence, about the control of religion rather than its negation. She therefore argues for understanding the ways in which Soviet secularism affected and altered religion, claiming that "historically shifting needs of governance" were the generators of ideas about and practices of religion in the Soviet Union (2012, 9). Sonja Luehrmann (2011) argues that there was something more in Soviet secularism than just the replacement of religion with the secular—a cinema for a church, for example. Rather, theorists of and materials about Soviet atheism saw "the need for atheism to be substantially different from the religious sensibilities it sought to replace" (2011, 7). At the heart of this was the notion of exclusive humanism. Luehrmann asserts that Soviet secularism diverges from Western variants regarding ideas about "privatized religion" or "individualism" but converges on the idea of "exclusive humanism" (2011, 8) as the aim of its project.

Like Wanner, I take an Asadian approach in my study, and like Luehrmann, I am interested in similarities and differences between Western variants of secularism and Soviet ones. My particular interest lies in the concept of religion that Soviet secularism formed, a terrain largely unproblematized in both (post) Soviet studies of secularism as well as the broader literature on the topic. The liberal, secular definition is usually assumed by default. A notable exception is Kristen Ghodsee (2009), who likewise problematizes the concept of religion in

her exploration of secularism in postsocialist Bulgaria and similarly finds an idea of religion that foregrounds ethnonational belonging rather than internal belief.

I understand the categories of "religion" and "the secular" to be parts of larger logics that are, importantly, co-constituted in given political and economic environments, in dialogue with particular religions over time. Because of the very specific struggle of my interlocutors, the aspect of secularism in which I became interested was its definition of religion. What I saw in post-Soviet Bazaar-Korgon was a debate over the nature of religion. What was being contested, I concluded, were two different ideas about this, each produced by a different project of secularism. I therefore began to interrogate what religion, as a concept, must have looked like during the Soviet era. This in turn led me to examine how this idea of religion emerged from a context shaped by, among other things, practices and ideas about religion in the Orthodox Church, a Russian imperial encounter with Islam in Central Asia, and the very specific nature of the Soviet state and economy. My interests thus diverged from the sociology of religion/secularism, in which religion often appeared, by default, as individual, internal belief and in which such ideas were premised on the structure and functioning of the Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations, as well as their doctrines, habits, conceptions of time or the soul, and truth, for example, as well as on the particularities of western European states and their histories. The "believing without belonging" referenced in the titles of Davie's article and book is just such a case.

In a revised edition of her book on religion in Britain, Davie (2015) looks back at the popularity of the phrase "believing without belonging." She is careful to reiterate that the terms she employed should "not be considered too rigidly" (2015, 79). With this injunction in mind, it is nonetheless important to sketch out that, generally, for Davie, belonging seems to be connected to practice in and attendance at the church as institution. Already at this point, Davie's ideas prove insufficient for my study of Islam in Kyrgyzstan. Using only a very general concept of Islam that elides all variation in interpretation and practice among Muslims in space and time, we see that in Islam "belonging" does not mean to link one with an institution; it has more to do with community and relationship to people and God—the *umma*. Davie also mentions practice. Here too her conception proves to be too firmly rooted in a particular religious tradition to make it useful for my analysis. Practice, in a Protestant tradition, diverges from that rooted in Catholicism or Orthodoxy, for example, as it does from the various interpretations of Islam and other religions of the former socialist world. Therefore, when I invoke the words *belonging* and *belief*, I have different notions and a different process in mind than Davie. Belonging and believing mean different things in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia than they do in western Europe.

But this is not the only difference in my analysis, for in using these words I am not attempting to describe the habits or ideas of particular religious practitioners, as Davie was. I use these words—*belonging* and *belief*—as heuristic devices, not to indicate what people are or are not doing but to point to what I believe are two different notions of religion formed by two particular projects of secularism.

What was Soviet secularism? On what notion of the secular was it premised? These are questions I cannot definitively answer in this introduction. A partial answer may be found in a genealogical investigation of religion and the secular as they emerged from Russian Orthodoxy, which would be a study similar to Asad's on European Christianity. The burgeoning work on Eastern Christianities is already revealing fascinating insights in this vein, a few of which are relevant for my discussion here.[10] This literature shows, for example, a specific conception of "the person" in Orthodoxy, one that differs from liberal notions of the individual (Hann and Goltz 2010; Hirschon 2010; Agadjanian and Rousselet 2010). Personhood, in some instances, is understood as bestowed by God and can be realized only in Holy Communion, which carries a social sense of being part of a larger collectivity (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2010); it is the idea of a socially embedded person (Hirschon 2010). Working from these concepts—instead of ideas about individuals, for example—necessarily leads to alternative conceptions of religion and the secular. Similarly, ideas about the relationship of the material/immaterial (e.g., Hanganu 2010; Luehrmann 2010; Rogers 2010), conceptions of the church and the idea of the community of believers (Hann and Goltz 2010), or ideas about mediation, practice, or interiority and exteriority all lead to an idea of religion that diverges from liberal ones. And because these notions of religion arose not only in Russia but throughout the vast territory of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, among a variety of people and their religions, in a multiplicity of political expansions, encounters, and appropriations, the same kind of analysis is necessary for these various contexts if a fuller, more complex idea of religion and the secular in Soviet secularism is to emerge.

Such an analysis is too vast a project for this book. My argument is but one contribution to this effort. In the remainder of this introduction I look at policies, programs, and approaches of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union in order to get at some of the general, underlying logics, including the notion of religion, at work. Based on the secondary historical literature, I give a sense of the category of religion I think the Soviet state casted and authorized in Central Asia, how it related to preceding Russian imperial notions of religion and Central Asian ideas and practices of Islam, and the way this concept of religion looked and worked by the end of the Soviet period. This category of religion was at play when alternative, primarily liberal notions of religion confronted many of my interlocutors in the early post-Soviet period.

Notions of Religion in the Russian Empire

The concept(s) of religion that were at work in Soviet secularism and that emerged from it came from prevailing conceptualizations in the Russian imperial period. My aim in this section is not to provide a systematic account of Russian imperial attitudes, policies, and institutions regarding religion generally or Islam specifically over the empire's very long history and in its encounter with many different groups of people. Rather, I simply attempt to sketch some of the general qualities of religion as it emerged. The notion of religion as a defining, essential characteristic of a people was prominent in Russia before the imperial expansion. Michael Khodarkovsky (1997, 17) argues, for example, that "religion defined the aggregate identity of Russians in premodern Russia." Religion was also a means for classifying non-Russians within Russia's borders. Andreas Kappeler ([2001] 2014) argues that religion in premodern Russia was the primary means for classifying its population, for while individuals could, and often did, speak multiple languages, especially among the middle and upper classes, a person could have only one religion. As the empire expanded, this understanding of religion as an essential element of collectivity carried on in the Russian imperial encounter with the "others" that occupied the lands to the south and the east. Language was one of the primary markers of difference used in the earliest years of Russian expansion (Kappeler [2001] 2013, 14), but territory, kinship, and religion were likewise employed in the project of classification and difference making.

As the empire expanded into non-Christian lands, religion as a differentiating factor became more prominent (Kappeler [2001] 2013, 15; İğmen 2012, 11). Russian imperial actors, researchers, and intellectuals began the process of identifying and classifying the "other" in their expanding empire. Curiosity about the nature of the other, which extended to delineating who they were and sketching a normative evaluation of them, began, as Yuri Slezkine (1997, 30) argues, under Peter the Great and his "mentors"—Germans interested in travel, study, and classification. Among scholars and other elites, religion was initially understood as the essential and most basic defining element of a people, a category that subsumed all other markers, including dietary habits, sexual and kinship practices, and relationship to land (32). However, the place and understanding of religion began to shift in and through these investigations; religion became one element among the others and it increasingly became seen as the spirit or culture of the people (33). The various peoples of the empire were classified as distinct from each other, often in an evolutionary scale, and from Russians, who were therefore co-constituted in this dialogue; the consolidation of Russians as, among other things, essentially Christian, became more pronounced. It seems that religion

at this moment was often spoken about not in terms of belief but, according to Slezkine, with reference to "ethical and liturgical precepts collectively known as 'law'" (33). Material culture, dress, and bodily fashioning were likewise tied up with this notion of religion (Frank 2012, 64–75).

This concept of religion as concerning the spirit of a people and the regulation of their community took hold and became widespread in various strata of the population throughout the empire at least partly because it was one of the classificatory elements used when delineating, understanding, and, importantly, ruling the various peoples. As Robert Crews (2006, 8) argues, while "modern scholars tend to conceptualize this diversity [of the Russian imperial population] in terms of ethnic or national categories . . . tsarist elites consistently viewed the heterogeneous peoples of the empire through the lens of religious affiliation." It was the means through which the ruled were made legible and governable. Religious leaders, for example, were used as a strategic means of exercising authority. Religious affiliation also played a role in the determination of tax regimes or army service. As late at the early nineteenth century, religion was still the primary criterion for legal identification, even above language (Kappeler [2001] 2014). The "nomadic people" of the Russian Empire were at that time, for example, prominently referred to in legal documents by the term *inovertsy* (of a different faith) ([2001] 2014). The term *inorodtsy* (foreign-born) appears for the first time in a proposed statute in 1798 ([2001] 2014), though Paul Georg Geiss (2003, 154–55) notes that in administrative contexts in the early nineteenth century, the criteria for use of the term still had more to do with religious affiliation than other indicators.

In being ruled this way, imperial subjects were drawn into a logic in which religion was, in part, a means of presenting, maneuvering, contesting, and understanding oneself in reference to a collective body and the state that granted rights, privileges, and resources in these terms (Geiss 2003, 2, 10). Over the long history of Russian imperial rule, difference and collective rights were the basis of governance and the means by which subjects connected to the polity (Burbank 2006). Even in the mid-nineteenth century, when there were liberal calls for reform of this policy in the direction of universal rights, "officials defaulted in practice to the habit of manipulable, unequal rights" of "natural" collectives (Burbank 2006, 400). This conception of rights and rule persisted to the beginning of the twentieth century and, Burbank argues, continued to inform ideas into the Soviet period.

Religion became a primary mode for Russian rulers to understand and control their populations for at least one other important reason. Religion was understood as an effective way to govern—in terms of the classification of the populations and in the utilization of laws and leaders—because it was seen as

a "comprehensive system for discipline" that would ensure "personal salvation" as well as the "general good" contributing to public order, morality, and ethics (Crews 2006, 42). Policies regarding non-Orthodox religious groups, however, changed over time. Under Peter the Great there was a time of forced conversion to Orthodoxy simultaneous with certain moves toward religious freedom (Kappeler [2001] 2013), though Geiss (2003, 154) classifies the tsar's general approach as anti-Islamic. Catherine the Great initiated a more flexible and pragmatic stance toward religion (Kappeler [2001] 2013), and under her there was an "Islamic-Tatar" renaissance (Geiss 2003, 154). Catherine II is often understood to have evaluated Islam as favorable or more evolved vis-à-vis other religions in the empire.

Religion was understood not only as elemental to a people's collective belonging and a means for exercising power over them but also as intrinsic to their character and their collective morality. While there had long been an ambiguous relationship between the Russians and the nomads and Muslims of Asia, Kappeler ([2001] 2013) argues, the normative evaluation of the differences took a negative turn toward the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, when a marked sense of superiority developed and religion became the prominent cleavage between the two. Under Catherine the Great, this situation worked itself out in terms of "civilizing missions" (Kappeler [2001] 2014). Russian orientalism in Turkestan, for example, objectified and essentialized all that was "other" among its Muslim populations as being located in Islam. "'Fanaticism' came to be the defining characteristic of Central Asia," Adeeb Khalid (1998, 51) has argued, and this, he asserts, was "seen to reside in Islam." The understood antidote was civilization, modernization, and enlightenment. What is important for this discussion is not the normative evaluation—flattering, praiseworthy, derogatory, or demonizing—of a religion but the work that the category of religion was doing: it was summing up a people and their qualities.

Religion as a category emerged as an idea of people together—both their spirit or essential defining traits and the way they regulated their communal life. This movement was concomitant with changes in conceptualizations about collective belonging itself. There were contradictory, sometimes ambiguous normative evaluations of religion, but the contours of religion as a category of belonging were more cohesive and clear.[11] Religion in imperial Russia was about collective belonging, collective ethics, and a communal ethos. It was understood as an important element of control in a state with a diverse population; it was an essential element of identity for those populations and the means by which they could be recognized.

It would be a mistake to see these ideas about and modes of ruling through religion as disconnected from ideas and practices prominent in Europe or other

regions of the world likewise undergoing changes in notions and practices of religion and collective belonging. Certainly liberal notions of religion, which premised "belief" as central to religion, were to be found in the Russian Empire.[12] But the relationship was complex, and intertwined were dialogues with two broad strands of European thought—liberalism and romanticism—the latter more akin to the ideas of "belonging" I have sketched here.[13] Despite this, the idea of religion as belonging held prominence. Moreover, more widespread and institutionally practiced sets of ideas, predicated on interpersonal, collective notions, were also prominent in the region, effecting and shaping not only an emergent sense of religion but also notions and practices as diverse as citizenship, economic relations, the self, or political authority, for example. This is important as the idea of religion in Soviet Central Asia developed in tandem with that of the modern nation.

Religion and Belonging in Soviet Central Asia

An understanding of religion as collective belonging and the regulation thereof were prominent in Central Asia at the end of the Russian imperial period. It was continuously evolving and being constituted in conversation with altering and emerging forms of collective identity. A prominent one at the moment was the modern idea of nation. The two ideas continued to intermingle and co-constitute one another during the onset of the Bolshevik Revolution and eventually the start of the antireligious attacks in Central Asia. The interwoven nature of these notions is apparent whether we look, broadly speaking, at ideas in Orthodox Christianity, at concepts prominent among elites and distant state authorities involved in the modernizing campaigns as the Soviet Union began to take shape, or at those ideas more locally connected to Central Asia and to Islam as it existed in the region. The notions held by these various actors were not identical by any means, but the overlap provided, in part, the vocabulary through which they conversed and mutually constituted one another. From this history, ideas and practices of religion and nation developed simultaneously in Central Asia. It is to a discussion of this development that I now turn.

Modes of collective belonging in Central Asia prior to the consolidation of power by the Russian Empire in the mid- to late nineteenth century were tied to social and economic status, guilds, language, lineage and other kinship groups, settled and nomadic patterns of residence, and Islam (Khalid 1998; Geiss 2003; Edgar 2004, 18; Finke 2014). These modes were overlapping, competing, and deeply intertwined. By the late nineteenth century modern ideas and projects of the nation had begun to develop and circulate in Central Asia, and, as in Russia, they were multiple, divergent, and sometimes conflicting. In Central Asia some of the earliest deployments of the idea of the nation for modern political projects

came from, among others, the Jadids, who themselves were in conversation with their European Russian counterparts as well as with modernist movements in the Ottoman Empire and throughout the Muslim world (Khalid 1998).

Russian officials were already commissioning and utilizing ethnographic data to classify and govern imperial subjects. Bolsheviks continued this following the revolution and in the early 1920s, even as their notions of the relationship of Central Asian nations to the Russian nation in a now socialist union differed significantly (Khalid 2006). Ideally, in communist ideology the nation would be bypassed. In order to arrive at this end-point evolutionary state, however, many of those shaping the earliest Soviet policies and projects were convinced that the various peoples of the Soviet Union had to pass through the proper stages of development, moving through full nationhood, before they could achieve a postnational state.

An early step in this process was an ethnographic effort to identify, delineate, and classify the various peoples of the Soviet Union. Tsarist-era romantic ideas of the nation informed decisions about what kind of "material" should be utilized to classify the nations. Francine Hirsch (2005, 164) points to "local cultures, religions, kinship structures, *byt* (Russian: everyday life), physical type, and languages" as the primary elements being considered. The material needed for the national repertoire of traditions of each ethnonational group—national dishes, language, clothing, instruments, and heroes—was largely gathered by Soviet ethnographers. However, the cultural forms were not invented ex nihilo; they were largely based on existing material.[14] But this material was then systematized, standardized, displayed, and taught to the "titular groups" involved, as well as to other nationalities. The actions, policies, and unintended consequences of these efforts by Soviet authorities, in dialogue and power plays with local national elites, created national boundaries, facilitated the formation of ethnonational consciousness, and encouraged the gathering of "cultural stuff" that was associated with each nationality (Grant 1995; Slezkine 2000; T. Martin 2001; Hirsch 2005; Pelkmans 2006). The need to mobilize national identity in order to access power, resources, and social rewards within the command economy of the Soviet Union made the adaptation of these identities essential for survival and advancement (Kandiyoti 1996; Hirsch 2005).

Religion was an essential element in the classification of the various peoples, as well as in the emerging nationalities and nations identities (Hirsch 2005, 101–227). Similarly, things like byt, which included ways of dressing, eating, and cooking, as well as household-related rituals or life-cycle events, were likewise elements drawn upon in the conceptualizing and constructing of nations (Northrop 2004, 51; Kamp 2006). These things were, for most Central Asians, likewise tied up with being Muslim. Thus religion—being Muslim—was being

intimately intertwined with the emerging sense of the Kyrgyz or Uzbek nation, for example. This process was fraught with power plays and competing narratives and riddled with contradictions. And, just as these elements were being gathered up and prioritized as essential components of the emergent nations, other programs and policies of the Soviet state were labeling them as traditional at best and as backward, ignorant, or threatening at worst. These elements were being cultivated so that they could be surpassed. This is one of the essential contradictions of a modernizing regime: the modern can only exist in reference to tradition; tradition must be created for the modern to come into existence, and yet the modern is always anticipating and aiming toward tradition's demise.

Soviet Secular Production of Muslimness

Soviet atheist campaigns occurred concurrent with the creation of nations, and a similar counterintuitive and somewhat contradictory effect resulted from them. As Soviet officials, antireligious activists, and local and national elites who supported these efforts attempted to eradicate religion, they were in fact involved in defining what religion was. These definitions were then further shaped by those who opposed the antireligious efforts and by those who were forcibly drawn into the rather virulent material conversation. In this process, a particular category of religion was produced.

The antireligious campaigns of the early Soviet period were among the most militant, violent, and thorough of the twentieth century. They were in fact an attempt at atheism. The state endeavored not only to regulate religion—by creating a space free of it—it tried to eliminate it, in at least three particular moments over the seventy years of Soviet history. The antireligious campaigns of the early 1920s included propaganda drives aimed at teaching Central Asians that religion was false and science had triumphed over it (Keller 2001a, 2001b), as well as anticlerical measures that targeted traditionalist clergy and initially supported reformers (Keller 2001b, 69–140), such as the Jadids in Central Asia (Khalid 1998). Those involved in the campaigns took the Orthodox Church as a model of how religious life was structured and on that basis targeted what were interpreted to be Islam's primary institutions and leadership (Keller 1992), though Muslim activists argued against the efficacy of this approach (Keller 2001a).

These early years of the Soviet Union modernization and antireligious campaigns were rather unsuccessful. Leaders of these movements therefore changed tactics multiple times and tried various means to discredit Islam throughout Central Asia. In the Fergana Valley, they ultimately squared their attack on byt—notions of everyday life—as embodied by women and the home (Northrop 2004). They aimed their efforts at veiled women, arguing that their imprisonment in the *paranji* represented the evils of fanatical Islam.[15] Unveiling women

was seen as tantamount to their liberation. The campaign was simultaneously part of attacks on religion and a push to speed up the cultural modernization of the region.

Early effects of the *hujum* (attack or assault), which began in 1927, varied.[16] While some embraced the movement, others rejected it. Discussing the campaigns in Uzbekistan, Marianne Kamp (2006, 134) notes that "unveiling had supporters and opponents from every social class and group within Uzbek society. There were women who unveiled in opposition to their families, and women who remained veiled in opposition to their families." As with the establishment of nations, this process too was riddled with conflicts and power struggles. The very same elements that had been used to classify and codify peoples and create nations—manner of dress or religion—were being targeted, for example, as repressive, patriarchal, or backward (see Edgar 2004, 13–14). Those opposed to the hujum read it simultaneously as the continued encroachment of Soviet power into community structures and local power, an attack on Islam, and a threat to the Uzbek nation (Kamp 2006, 186–87; Northrop 2004, 185–87). The Soviet state had begun to extend its reach into people's lives (Kamp 2006). The veil became, for a time, a centralized and valorized element of the emergent Uzbek identity as it was attacked by those involved in the atheist campaigns.[17]

While these early attacks on Islam were ineffective, long-term efforts succeeded in nearly eliminating central Muslim institutions and practices, including institutions of religious learning, religious authority, and collective worship. *Waqf* property was confiscated. Religious leaders were killed or deported. Religious education and chains of knowledge were interrupted. A change of alphabet was forced—from Arabic to Latin and finally to Cyrillic—at least partly to prohibit access to philosophical, legal, and literary texts used by religious specialists of the region (Shahrani 1995, 278). Although some of these texts survived until the post-Soviet period and, at least in Bazaar-Korgon, were cherished as links with the past and held up as evidence of a chain of religiosity and scholarly learning, the material in them was largely inaccessible to those who secretly owned them. Fasting at Ramadan and collective prayer were prohibited. Veils were forcibly removed. While the process was uneven, the power and reach of the state were both extensive and brutal. Through these campaigns then, not only were institutions, knowledge, practices, and sometimes people eliminated but particular elements of Muslim life were evaluated and continuously classified by state actors as improper, fraudulent, threatening, or outdated religion; religion became something that needed to be continually regulated and/or eliminated by the state.

Concomitant with struggles against religion were the promotion of Soviet ideals and modernization projects. While women were unveiling and being unveiled, they were also being offered new possibilities for work, recreation, and

home life. Notions of gender equality were promoted and discursively tied to the Soviet modernization projects. While it has been argued that the dream of creating a "Homo sovieticus" was never achieved, the Soviet period did transform, and had lasting effects on, the inhabitants of the union.[18] During the Soviet period, primary reference points for identification shifted from regional, tribal, and occupational groups to an ethno-religious nation. Mass education became universal, as did an appeal to texts and the interpretation of them as sources of legitimacy and knowledge. Rational, scientific investigation was touted as a means of personal and societal advancement, and certain technological accomplishments—both small ones at the local level, such as electricity, plumbing, and the telephone, as well as prestige projects, including steel plants and a space program—helped shore up faith in these ideals. The command economy and collective agriculture transformed not only means of production and modes of consumption but also ways of acquiring and exercising status, influence, and goods (Humphrey 2002).[19] Moreover, as argued above, access to goods, resources, favor, power, and social life was conditional upon proper performance in this ideological environment, helping to ensure its continuation. Important within this was one's belonging to a particular ethno-religious nation.

Amid the attack on religion on the one hand and the promotion of scientific atheism, progress, and modern life on the other, there were Muslim practices, spaces, and ideas that escaped the antireligious campaigns. These notions and practices, equally bound up with the concept of Muslimness, persisted, though of course not unchanged (Shahrani 1984). Many of these things, such as the marking of life-cycle events and rituals related to the home, were connected to the domestic sphere and the concept of "everyday life" (byt) that had been valorized as a key component of national culture (Hirsch 2005; Northrop 2004). They also included things like mode of dress, language, or food. These were at times lauded—as when national traditions were displayed at school festivals—and at other times simply left alone or unrecognized—as when food was cooked in oil on Thursdays for the sake of the ancestors. Likewise, rituals surrounding death persisted, shrines were visited, and appeals to saints made. These practices continued for a variety of reasons. As Bruce Grant's (2011) interlocutors in the Caucasus indicate, they continued perhaps even because authorities feared the power of a saint or because of the complicated negotiating of powers between local authorities and practitioners of religion, who were sometimes one and the same (Abashin 2014; Grant 2011).

The antireligious campaigns were most virulent during Stalinism. Attitudes toward and policies and plans regarding religion eased in the immediate postwar period, and we can speak of a regulation of religion across the entire Soviet Union during this time (1943–47). The easing of antireligious pressure brought about

an increase in religious practice, which worried officials and led to a much firmer approach from 1947 to 1954, though without the violent repression of the 1920s and 1930s (Ro'i 2000, 10). Another period of permissiveness prevailed from 1955 to 1958, followed by yet a third wave of heavy repression under Khrushchev from 1958 to 1964 (Ro'i 2000, 10; Tasar 2010, 4). From the mid-1960s onward the approach was generally one of toleration, though it was a negative tolerance in which religion was discouraged and treated as a necessary evil and efforts were still made to "educate" the population about their false beliefs.

During the early and mid-Soviet period many elements seen as inherently part of being a Muslim were not included in the attacks on religion and were inadvertently tied into a sense of national identity. However, those leading the renewed attacks on religion in the postwar period became alert to the way these forms and practices of religion were interwoven with national identity. Attempts to eradicate these practices followed, along with, in some cases, efforts to separate what was "religion" and what was "culture," and then promoting the latter in an effort to eliminate the former (e.g., Ro'i 2000, 698–99). It was largely impossible to make this distinction, however. One reason is that what was considered non-religious in Moscow could easily be construed as essentially Muslim in Central Asia or adopted as such in power struggles between local and distant elites (698–99). Another reason is that religion and culture had become even more interwoven for Muslims of the region, as well as for many other religious groups across the union (682–700). In her research on religion in the Volga region, Luehrmann (2012, 288, 295) points to two important reasons the effort to separate religion from culture failed, namely, the inability of policy makers and planners in Moscow who crafted the broad framework of antireligious campaigns to adequately conceive of both the meanings and functions of religion in local life, as well as their contradictory stances and inability to come to terms with "the difficult nexus between religion and communal identities."

Thus, despite reinvigorated attempts to eradicate religion as manifested in domestic spaces and life-cycle events, Muslim practice and an idea of Muslimness as tied to national identity continued. Examining the postwar era, Eren Tasar (2010, 61) indicates that Muslim practice was possible at times and in certain spaces because there was an overlap in the moral vocabularies of different traditions: "Central Asian (community, family, dedication to one's region or locality, respect for elders), Islamic (sacrifice, charity, erudition, devotion to one's homeland), and Soviet (sacrifice, love for the homeland, labor)." This palimpsest of values made some practices resonant and become positively readable in different, overlapping registers. Johan Rasanayagam (2011), examining the late Soviet period, argues that the coexistence of Muslim practice and selfhood within a Soviet secular state was made possible through the kind of deterritorialized mi-

lieus Alexi Yurchak (2006) has described. In these spaces of sociality, which were opened up by state discourse and action, members could, among other things, act and create themselves as Muslims in ways that were not necessarily inimical to or in support of the state (Rasanayagam 2011, 77). Or, as Rasanayagam (2014) would later argue, Muslimness flourished because the notion of a national culture was located between the politicized categories of backward, premodern tradition and fully enlightened Soviet culture. It was a form that could supposedly be "filled" with socialist content (see Pelkmans 2005, 2007). However, because it was the space allowed for life-cycle rituals linked to a sense of being Muslims, for most Central Asians it was likewise the space left for constructing oneself as a part of a moral community (Rasanayagam 2014, 11, 14).

It was not only that Muslim practice remained that is important for this argument. The practices that remained, the ideas that persisted, the objects and the spaces that continued were altered to address the new political, social, and economic environment. Muslimness ultimately became inseparable from an emerging national identity; it was an element that was at once tolerated, ignored, or unseen by the state but sometimes found acceptable, mobilized, acknowledged, or even celebrated. The nationalizing policies of the union, as they emerged over the century, continued to stimulate the development of an institutionalized, folklorized sense of nationality that included Muslimness.[20] An international political union that wanted to go beyond nationalism and a rational scientific state that wanted to eradicate religion had unintentionally created nations and a sense of ethnonational identity that was inextricably bound up with religious belonging.

The emerging category of religion therefore began to take shape through at least two means: the attacks on it in the atheist campaigns and the consolidation of it as a part of national belonging. In the former (the process of eradication), we see the state drawing a boundary, finding, identifying, monitoring, and eliminating or destroying those elements of religious life found to be inadmissible—the ones that would threaten its ontology. But perhaps most important for this discussion is the latter process. At the same moment that the secular state mapped out what "religion" was not allowed, being Muslim as an element of national culture (not as personal religious affiliation or faith) became an acceptable referent for public identification and at times necessary for successful participation in a multinational/religious political union.

The nationalities policies of the Soviet Union, which made these identities critical for advancement and for the acquisition of resources (Kandiyoti 1996) and which built what Terry Dean Martin (2001) has called an affirmative action empire, entailed a constant awareness of one's own specific ethnonational/religious identity and its difference from the other nationalities of the union. In

essence then, there was a persistent discussion, a perpetual renegotiation and deployment of an idea of religion as well as a specific concept of Muslimness that was tied to a collective, now national, identity. Importantly, the performance of this identity counted, not only because of the moral registers it hit, the sense of belonging and meaning it gave, or the space it made for creating oneself in reference to Islamic tradition. The performance of this identity was essential for the creation of oneself in public secular life, the acquisition of land and other resources, the ability to apply for academic positions, and a whole host of other practical elements of daily life necessary for survival and well-being.

Central Asians were not isolated, interacting only with one another. Muslimness was understood as part of being Uzbek or Kyrgyz; it was also understood that all nations within the Soviet Union had a religious component to their national identity. Nations were, in part, defined by their religion, as they were by their dress, their language, the dishes they prepared, and the way they married, for example. The construction of national cultures and belonging was always a contrastive one; Muslimness was juxtaposed to, for example, the Christianity of the Ukrainians or Russians (or compared to the Muslimness of the Kazakhs, Tatars, or Azerbaijanis), a trait already present in the early imperial period. Displayed in museums, shown on posters, discussed in textbooks, promoted in affirmative action policies, and celebrated in festivals, the nations were created in contrast to one another and along an axis of set components. And these were not distant others; Slavic populations settled in Central Asian regions. Central Asians traveled and studied throughout the union. All nationalities fought together in war. National culture, which included religion, was created, celebrated, discussed, and displayed (Hirsch 2005).

Returning to my interlocutors, one of the primary challenges they felt in the post-Soviet period, when alternative interpretations of Islam appeared in the region, was to their understanding of themselves as Muslims, which they defined primarily based on birth into the community, adherence to rituals and norms often related to the home and life-cycle events, the wearing of certain kinds of clothing, the cooking of certain kinds of meals, and belief in God. In short, there was an understanding of a community of belonging that was simultaneously religious and ethnonational.

Nonliberal Logics and Secular Religion

The secular state delineates religion's space and its definition. It does so in conversation with religious actors who live, act, and create from within the ideational-material logics of the system; it is the environment within which they form themselves, their communities, their ideas, their material objects, their systems of knowledge, their particular positions of power, their critique and efforts at

change, and their religion, all in a manner that can be heard and carried out in these logics. My assertion is that in the Soviet Union—for various material and ideational reasons—the idea of community, and of practice, became highlighted and centralized in the category of religion, much as internalized belief did in liberal variants of religion. Both were formed through a political project of secularism, but with alternative notions of the modern and the secular. Using this articulation of religion was necessary for material survival and flourishing with the Soviet Union, as discussed above, because of the way access, rights, and resources were granted. It likewise made sense to Muslims because an idea of religion that centralized belonging and praxis fit with ideas and practices of Islam in the region at that time.

Religion developed through and as an understanding of collective belonging as employed, for example, in the administration of distant territories and in historical-evolutionary ideas of human society and its development. At work in this construction of religion—however intended, implicit, or inadvertent—was the logic of Soviet modernity and one of its key ideas, the interpersonal. The Soviet state's vision, organization, and attempts to transform society prioritized and presupposed the interpersonal—the notion that society should be transformed through and on the basis of collective action. Ideas of citizenship more rooted in joint responsibility, for example, or economics premised on redistribution articulated these logics.[21] So did ideas about communal effort being the mode of societal transformation, with the object of change being the collective itself.[22] They were conceptions that resonated with and developed in part from ideas within Islam and Orthodoxy as understood and practiced at the time. These logics developed into particular conceptions of nations and citizens and informed the way individuals understood their participation in, resistance to, ambivalence about, or survival in the socialist political economy. The development of a concept of religion—both material and ideational—was tied to and co-constitutive of this set of ideas and material practices.

I understand the logics of a state, as well as its particular modes of power, to be rooted in and bound up with the mode of production, and following Hann (2012) and Asad (1993, 2003) I want to understand the way these modes directly and indirectly affected religion, including its categorical definition and its space. Religion as collective belonging fit within socialism's broader logics and modes of power and was consistent with the particularities of the Soviet modernizing regime. But this state and its practices and ideas were not liberal. Internal faith and privatized religion fit the liberal logic of the autonomous individual—a logic that gives inspiration and drives things like the American Dream while simultaneously serving as the basis of power that keeps individuals captive to the state and the market, leaving them precarious, fluctuating, and atomized without recourse

to social support. It fits with ideas of ethics and conscience as a personal matter (Asad 2003, 247), with ideas about technologies of power producing subjects that police themselves (247). It was another logic that gave the idea of religion as collective belonging its context—a logic that inspired the dream of socialist citizens collectively working for the common good, that saw the transformation of society and its material structures as necessary for moral regulation, and that simultaneously enabled and consolidated power in the hands of the party-state, which could, in the interest of the collective and on the authority of determining that good, dominate the state's subjects and their will. This logic worked through and on the basis of collectives, co-creating and objectifying them, in some cases where they did not exist, so that later they could be surpassed and in the meantime could be used to create and police socialism.

In liberal secularism, acceptable religion could be the faith of an individual believer in a space (the private) that was removed from politics. The Soviet state's reach into the home and the politicization of private life left little space for this conceptualization or practice of religion to be legitimate (Luehrmann 2011, 9). Liberal variants of religion meshed with overarching liberal economic and political practices and ideas—that of the individual, of the self-made "man," of a social transformation brought about by individual change, of social needs met by nonstate actors. Models and practices of state, economy, and politics in the Soviet Union were different, necessitating a different idea and enactment of secularism and ultimately of religion. Bolshevik and later Soviet models of societal change, for example, began with the proper construction of social and economic institutions, or aesthetic and cultural practices, which would then result in the alteration of individuals. Rather than truth springing from within the individual and leading to the transformation of society, structural change brought about by collective effort would generate individual transformation (see Wanner 2007, 33).

Luehrmann's (2011) work on secularism in Russia's Volga region is particularly informative here. Luehrmann analyzes the techniques of activists involved in the antireligious efforts of the late Soviet period. She describes how underlying notions of the collective alteration of society worked out in practice, showing the shape and nature of the Soviet publics that enacted them in the late Soviet era. Luehrmann's understanding of Soviet secularity is located in what she calls, building on Charles Taylor's work, its "exclusive humanism"—the idea that social relations do not include nonhuman agents and that society must be shaped and constructed with "human contemporaries [as] the only possible partners in action" (2011, 7–8). For Luehrmann, secularism in the Soviet Union was not premised on a notion of individualism or privatized religion. Instead it was constructed through a didactic public in which "the primary object of intervention

was often society as a whole, rather than individual selves" (10). Here, there was a notion of the "'malleable self' open to the influence of outside forces" in which "efforts to become a new person were inseparably tied to learning how to change others" (10). Rasanayagam's (2014) work on Islam in Uzbekistan points to a very similar conception and practice. He argues that the Soviet project in Central Asia should be seen as a civilizing mission that sought to move people beyond premodern traditions to a place of high culture, of civilization, and this was to be done through the transformation of the human subject: "the New Soviet Person was to enter society as part of a collective, achieving his or her human potential in the pursuit of collective, rather than individual, goals . . . worked out through the capillaries of society, in the workplace, in leisure activities and living space, and through practices of peer and self-criticism" (2014, 6–7).

Luehrmann's and Rasanayagam's ideas are useful here because they reveal both the underlying logics of Soviet power broadly and the particular way societal alteration was understood, both of which are inextricably tied in with the construction of religion. First, their work demonstrates that in theory there was no space free from the reach of the state, and thus the "private" was a space into which the state could legitimately intrude. This does not mean that the state always did intrude in practice, but it points to a different conception of what private and public were, what spaces were legitimate sites of political action, and what the nature, form, and aim of this action were. Second, there was a set of notions about transformation occurring through generative collective action, whether this was done in reference to the state, through party programs, via prestige projects such as steel plants and dams (Kotkin 1995; Kalinovsky forthcoming), or in local forms of sociability and conviviality, and also whether this was done in support of or in contrast to state-led activities or ideas or—as Yurchak (2006, 9) has pointed out—"in ways that did not fit either/or dichotomies."

As a secularizing regime, the Soviet state was constantly identifying and locating religion, drawing boundaries, and defining, in discourse and practices, the difference between acceptable, tolerable religion and threatening, improper religion. The latter category was perhaps the most easily identifiable—those things targeted in the antireligion campaigns—religious texts, knowledge and practice of certain rituals, certain forms of dress, authorities and teachers, and so on. The former category, in a society that sought the total eradication of religion, was inimical. In practice, however, much was tolerated and inadvertently cultivated "in the meantime." Religion, as allowed (explicitly and tacitly) by the state, signaled less the internal belief of an atomized individual—safe in private space from influencing politics—and more an ascriptive attribute of national belonging.

In saying that religion as a part of Soviet secularism was primarily about belonging, I am not arguing that "belief" was eliminated. I am not arguing

that Kyrgyz or Uzbek Muslims did not believe while identifying as Muslims or participating in rituals, or that they necessarily did. I am not asserting that belief and truth claims were unknown to them. In making this argument, I am not asserting anything about how they understood the concept of "belief" itself nor about the experiences they had when engaging in ritual, for example. That is not the point. The point is on which grounds religion could legitimately be discussed, appealed to, or understood in reference to, or as allowed by, the secular state, and in what ways religion fit the modern logics in which it was located and generated. What I am pointing to are the ways that the category of religion was co-constituted in dialogue with and tacitly, inadvertently, explicitly, or otherwise allowed by the state. In which space and form did the state allow for religion to be articulated? When was "Muslim" an acceptable referent for public identification? Religion could be invoked, but only as it announced national belonging.

The contrast with liberal variants of secularism, in which religion as belonging is excluded and invalidated by state actors and legal systems, becomes clear in examples found in Asad's (2003, 139–40) and Saba Mahmood's (2009, 79–83) work.[23] In both cases, we see a legal environment that invalidates a definition of religion premised on belonging in favor of one founded on belief. Actors can maneuver in these realms and on the basis of these laws only if they abide by and articulate themselves in reference to these definitions. In the case of Soviet Central Asia, collective belonging, on the other hand, was the only basis upon which religion could be positively, publicly defined or appealed to (even if the space for it was highly curtailed and limited when compared to religion in European or American contexts). Doing so with reference to faith or belief would have been impossible.

I do not want to overemphasize the distinction between liberal and nonliberal. They are both forms of modern power, carrying broad similarities, and certainly in the Soviet Central Asian case the idea of individual belief was not absent, nor has the notion of communal belonging disappeared from ideas about religion in Western contexts.[24] In fact, both individual and communal categories of religion are to be found in both liberal and nonliberal settings (Lehmann 2013); both are modern conceptions that were crafted while notions of the secular, as well as secularizing regimes, were emerging. They are treated and evaluated differently, however. Certain elements are highlighted and become more essential to conceptualizations in the Soviet case than in the others, and these are directly linked to the secular state that legitimizes religion and whose exercise of power and its creation of subjects follows this same logic, a logic tied in with its material regime.

The question remains: without a focus on the individual, on internal belief, on religion defined as a set of internal truth claims, was the notion of religion

in the Soviet Union a *modern* notion of religion? It was articulated by self-proclaimed so-called moderns and in a manner in which those deploying the idea did so from the stance that religion was something that had been or needed to be disentangled from politics, economics, or science, a Latourian articulation of the modern (Latour 1993). It was developed within the broader logics and endeavors of a state that had secularism and modernity as its self-proclaimed political project, an Asadian view of modernity as a historical epoch (Adad 2003, 14). It was connected to and premised on "a particular form of power and knowledge" that worked itself not only into the construction of an abstracted, universalized concept of religion but into new kinds of states, science, and subjects (Asad 1993, 43) and ways of organizing production.

Another way of putting it is that a modern state is, among other things, predicated on a particular mode of power. This power is legitimated, in part, through a supposed separation from religion and the right to delineate the proper boundaries, scope, and power of religion. In short, a secular state of self-proclaimed moderns can do nothing other than produce a modern form of religion; that is its ontological necessity, though of course the production and maintenance of such a notion takes time and proceeds unevenly. But here the secular takes on its particular Soviet form through its unique historical development in a Russian conceptualization of the secular that arose in part through its encounter in Central Asia.

Returning to the discussion of a secular, liberal notion of religion, there is the simultaneous, often contradictory program of liberal democracies that tolerate religion, and make space for its existence, but whose own power is invested in controlling, limiting, and enervating religion and whose modernizing narrative constantly waits for its demise. Religion's space then is left to the private belief of the individual—its primary defined trait—and the community of the faithful as they live and practice together—secondarily understood and defined by prior ascension to faith. This faith must be tolerated and respected or at least treated equally by the state in accord with the appeal to human rights. This ideally individualized religion is part and parcel of a larger frame of material and ideological practices and notions in a capitalist democracy in which the flexible, autonomous, individualized, rights-claiming self is fashioned in a neoliberal environment.

In the Soviet Union, there was another set of (contradictory) logics at work. There was a drive to actively eliminate religion simultaneous with the cultivation of collective belonging in a multinational environment that utilized religion as an indicator of the nation's character.[25] This occurred in a context in which rights, access to resources, and modes of development were connected to collectivities. Religion never needed to be fully disentangled conceptually from

culture. Nations, their characteristics, and the people who belonged to them were understood as a necessary element in the social evolution that would lead ultimately to communism. They likewise became central as means of control and modes of organized change. Socialism and ultimately the communist ideal did not depend on removing religion from national culture. It was celebrated in the historical-evolutionary moment of socialism that would be superseded completely as nations melted away and communism was reached. These national cultures would someday be replaced by a nation-free, religion-free, atheist-communist utopia. Religion would disappear when the material and ideological transformation of society was achieved, when the need for religion was no longer present because of collective structural alteration, because of the elimination of capitalist enslavement and premodern socioeconomic structures, and when enlightenment appeared as a result of public education. In the meantime, however, the group-oriented, collective identity of the nation, the religious-cultural community, fit within the material-ideological logics of the Soviet system.

Returning to the definition of religion among moderns, my proposition is that religion in a secular state does not always have to be individualizing and it does not always have to be premised on internal discourse above practice—this is its liberal variant. It's quite a self-evident claim on the one hand, as that is one of the essential definitions of liberalism. The Soviet variant turned out to be one in which collective belonging—benign and promoted in folklorized scripted forms, unrecognized in its tie to domestic spaces, targeted but not eliminated, or allowed by low-level leaders because of its importance to life-cycle events—came to be the quality that defined religion. The specific historical conception of religion in a nonliberal, secular environment was about belonging, not belief. Confronting the liberal idea of religion and the secular was the essential struggle and discomfort many of my interlocutors faced when the Soviet Union collapsed, when new ideas about religion, Islam, and being Muslim entered the region, and when the entire political economy was transformed.