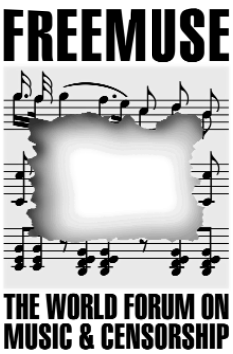
“Can you stop the birds singing?”

THE CENSORSHIP OF MUSIC
IN AFGHANISTAN



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by

JOHN BAILY

FREEMUSE

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"CAN YOU STOP THE BIRDS SINGING?"

The censorship of music in Afghanistan

by JOHN BAILY

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PREFACE

Censorship of music has existed ever since the time of ancient Greece.
Plato distinguished between 'good music' and 'bad music' – suggesting that 'bad' music had to be controlled or banned as it had the potential to divert people away from the 'good life'.

Since ancient Greece it looks like this philosophy on 'good' and 'bad' music has been repeated throughout the history of musical censorship. In recent history we have seen this taking place in the former Soviet Union, in Nazi-Germany and in the former DDR in a violent and brutal way.

A less harmful kind of censorship has occurred in modern times in many European countries when pop- and rock music was introduced, e.g. the censorship applied to rap music in the USA of today.

Severe censorship still exists in several countries, e.g. Algeria where many musicians have been forced to flee their country after serious threats and a number of musicians have been killed.

Music censorship has been implemented by states, religions, educational systems, families, retailers and lobbying groups – and in most cases they violate international conventions of human rights. Nevertheless very little research and documentation on music censorship has been done.

Why is it important to document and discuss music censorship in a world where wars, hunger, and the negative effects of economic globalisation seem so much more relevant?

For thousands of years, music has been one of the most essential cultural expressions. Music has been an important part of all cultures in their daily life, at celebrations, at ceremonies, for pleasure and serves as food for the soul.

When music is banned the very soul of a culture is being strangled. Ban a music culture for a decade and a whole generation grows up without an essential cultural reference. Only through the documentation of music censorship can we discuss and understand the effects of censorship. Only through documentation can we support suppressed cultural expressions.

In a world where transglobal industries market their cultural products – including music – through global media networks, small cultures need to support their cultural workers rather than censoring them.

In order to address the ever-present phenomenon of music censorship and to investigate the lack of interest in these violations of freedom of expression, the *1st World Conference on Music and Censorship* was organized in Copenhagen, Denmark, in November 1998. As a result of the conference Freemuse (Freedom of Musical Expression) – the World Forum on Music and Censorship was established in 1999, and in year 2000 Freemuse received core funding from The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This report 'Can you stop the birds singing?', written by Dr John Baily, Reader in Ethnomusicology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, is the first in a series of reports on music and censorship to be published by Freemuse. We have chosen Afghanistan, not only because it is an obvious 'case' for a profound survey, but also it is a country with a very rich musical heritage with traditions that go back many centuries. We have seen the process in which Afghan culture has slowly been taken away from its people. Ever since the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979 thousands of artefacts have been smuggled out to the Western art market and recently, in the preparation of this report we have witnessed the demolition of the ancient Buddha statues of Bamiyan.

Music is no longer part of daily life in Afghanistan. Unlike the situation in many other countries, Afghan song texts, or the poetry that is presented in a musical form, do not deal with political or current events, which elsewhere have provoked governments and the ruling classes and therefore seen as a justification for banning music. It is the music itself, songs accompanied by instruments and the performance of instrumental music that have been banned.

Marie Korpe,
Executive Director of Freemuse
Copenhagen, April 2001

ABSTRACT

The people of Afghanistan under Taliban rule are subjected to an extreme form of music censorship. The only musical activity permitted is the singing of certain religious songs and Taliban "chants".

The report traces the gradual imposition of music censorship since 1978, when the communist government of Nur Ahmad Taraki came to power in a violent *coup d'etat*. During 14 years of communist rule music in Afghanistan was heavily controlled by the Ministry for Information and Culture, while in the refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran all music was prohibited in order to maintain a continual state of mourning. The roots of the Taliban ban on music lie in the way these camps were run.

In the Rabbani period (1992-1996) music was heavily censored. In the provincial city of Herat, the newly formed Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (religious police) enforced a virtual ban on live public performance but private music making was permitted. There was a little music on radio and television, and audiocassettes of music were freely available. In Kabul conditions were somewhat more relaxed until Hekmatyar became Prime; cinemas were then closed and music was banned from radio and television.

When the Taliban took control of Kabul in 1996 a number of edicts were published against music. All musical instruments were banned, and when discovered by agents of the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice were destroyed, sometimes being burnt in public along with confiscated audio and video cassettes, TV sets and VCRs (all visual representation of animate beings is also prohibited).

The only forms of musical expression permitted today are the singing of certain kinds of religious poetry, and so-called Taliban "chants", which are panegyrics to Taliban principles and commemorations of those who have died on the field of battle for the Taliban cause.

The effects of censorship of music in Afghanistan are deep and wide-ranging for the Afghan people, both inside and outside the country. The lives of professional musicians have been completely disrupted, and most have had to go into exile for their economic survival. The rich Afghan musical heritage is under severe threat.

The report concludes with a number of recommendations intended to counteract the effects of censorship.

INTRODUCTION

The people of Afghanistan have endured more than twenty years of armed conflict and civil war. This started with the Communist coup of Taraki in 1978, followed by the Soviet invasion in 1979, years of *jihad* (Holy War – strongly supported and financed by the West), the fall of the last Communist government in 1992, several years of internecine conflict in the struggle for Kabul between various Mujahideen parties, and finally the gradual assumption of control over most of the country by the Taliban. The Taliban were initially supported by the West, interested in the pacification of Afghanistan and the development of trade and the exploitation of rich oil fields in Central Asia. They soon fell from favour once the full range of their policies became clear, most notably the very severe restrictions on women they have imposed, particularly concerning dress, work, and education. Many of these harsh restrictions are felt more keenly in Kabul, the capital, than in the provinces, and for two reasons: (a) Kabul was much more westernised than other cities, and (b) most educated Afghans and intellectuals lived there. As a consequence, Kabul seems to have been singled out for special retribution. But the Taliban, for all their repressive measures, are considered by many ordinary people in Afghanistan as preferable to the war-lordism of the previous period under President Rabbani, because at least some kind of law and order has been established in the areas under their control.

Amongst many other measures, the Taliban have imposed heavy censorship of music. There is a total proscription of all musical activity other than certain forms of unaccompanied religious recitation and singing. The aim of my report is to document the current ban on music, and to put it into a wider perspective, for it has its roots in the way Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan were run in the 1980s. The report arises from my many years of direct contact with Afghan music and musicians, starting with two years of ethnomusicological fieldwork in the 1970s in the provincial city of Herat (and to a lesser extent the capital, Kabul). This was

followed by three months research for a film about Afghan refugee musicians in Peshawar (Pakistan) in 1985, further visits to Islamabad and Peshawar in 1991 & 1992, to Herat in 1994, Mashad (Iran) in 1998, Fremont (California) in 1999, and Peshawar and Fremont again in 2000.

Apart from my own observations and interviews with Afghans (in order to protect my sources the information given is not attributed to named individuals) I have relied heavily on newspaper reports published in the UK and Pakistan. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the report of Rahimullah Yusufzai, which originally appeared in *Index on Censorship* and was reprinted in the Pakistani paper *The News* of 3 April 2000. Amongst my other sources I particularly mention Raja Anwar's remarkable book *The Tragedy of Afghanistan*, based on information collected by the author while imprisoned in Pul-e Charkhi prison in Kabul in the early 1980s. This contains invaluable insights into the state of music in Afghanistan in the early days of the communist era. I would also like to thank Marie Korpe and Freemuse for suggesting I write this report, which has given me much food for thought. Finally, I draw attention to Naim Majrooh's excellent article in the proceedings of the 1st World Conference on Music and Censorship (Korpe 2001), which anticipates much of what I have to report here in admirably succinct form.

Areas: 652,090 sq km (251,772 sq mls) [1]

Population (1998): 24,792,000
Including Afghan refugees estimated to about 1.1 million in Pakistan and about 1.4 million in Iran [1]

Capital: Kabul
(population - 1992 estimate; 1,127,000) [2]

Head of state and government:
Leader of the faithful [2]

Annual income per person: 450 US dollars [1]

Main industries:
Agriculture, carpets, and textiles [1]

Ethnic composition (early 1990): Pashtun 38%; Tajik 25%; Hazara 19%; Uzbek 6%; Chahar Aimak, Turkmen, Balochi, and other 12% [2]

Main export partners: CIS* nations 55%, Pakistan 16%, India 12% [1]

Main import partners: CIS* nations 61%, Japan 13% [2]

Infant mortality: 162 per 1,000 live births [1]

Life expectancy: Female 46,4 years, male 45,2 years [2]

Adult literacy (1998): 31,5% [1]

** Commonwealth of Independent States (former Soviet republics)*

Source:

[1] *Philip's Encyclopaedic World Atlas (George Philip: London, 1992) and;*

[2] *Encyclopaedia Britannica on-line 2001, www.britannica.com*

1. AFGHANISTAN

1.1 HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHY

The independent country we know today as Afghanistan came into being in 1747, when the territory was seized by Afghan tribesmen serving as mercenary troops in Iran in the time of Nadir Shah Afshar, after that ruler's assassination. Most of this geographical region was at the time divided between Safavid Iran to the west and Moghul India to the east. A tribal council elected Ahmad Shah Abdali (or Durrani, as this Afghan clan was later called) as their Amir (ruler, leader).

The name Afghanistan (meaning "land of the Afghans") came into use some time later, and was coined by British commentators; before that the region was called Khurasan by those who lived there (Mousavi 1998:2-5). The matter of the name is symbolic of the power exercised over Afghanistan by the British in India for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The present frontiers of Afghanistan were only agreed in the late 19th century, with the participation of British India and Russia, who wished to maintain a neutral and backward "buffer zone" between their empires. One hundred years later that imperial rivalry had been transformed into the struggle for world domination between the USSR and the USA (operating through Pakistan, with Saudi Arabian support). The people of Afghanistan are undoubtedly the losers in a conflict which was largely out of their understanding and control.

Afghanistan has always had a complex "ethnicity problem", being the home of a number of ethnic groups, or nationalities, which differ amongst themselves in terms of culture, notably language, mode of economic production, and religion (Sunni and Shi'a forms of Islam). The largest and most powerful of these groups are the Pashtuns, the "true Afghans", speakers of the Pashto language, known to the British in India as Pathans. The Pashtuns are a tribal people, and account for perhaps 50% of the population of Afghanistan, estimated in the 1970s at about 15 million people altogether (i.e. 7.5 million Pashtuns). The Pashtun heartlands

are located in the south and southeast, but Pashtuns settled all over the country, partly to consolidate their control over the region, partly to take advantage of opportunities for land seizure made available to them. There is another large population of Afghans in Pakistan, mostly in North-West Frontier Province, and called in the local dialect Pakhtuns. Many of Afghanistan's present day problems arise from the Pashtunistan Movement in the mid-20th century, when Afghanistan encouraged the Pakhtuns of Pakistan to aspire to their own independent state, to be called Pashtunistan.

Another principal ethnic group in Afghanistan may conveniently be termed Tajik, although that is not a word generally used in the past by themselves. Tajiks are Persian speakers (Farsiwan) found in many parts of the country, especially the west (Herat), and the north (Badakhshan), and Kabul. A separate Persian speaking nation are the Hazaras, who inhabit the central Hazarajat mountains. There are also speakers of Turkic languages in the north, such as Uzbeks and Turkomans, and numerous other smaller groups. In order to make terminology easier we shall in this report call anybody born in Afghanistan and who claims citizenship of that country *Afghan*, regardless of ethnic affiliation, as specified in the Constitution. This idea is elegantly expressed in the following couplet by the nationalist Pashtun poet Malang Jan:

> *Chay ay mor'i da khawra zaqawalay*
> *Ka pa har zhaban goyaa day khow Afghan day*
>
> That person who was given birth by his mother on this soil
> Whatever language he speaks, he is still an Afghan[1]

Since 1747 Afghanistan has been dominated by Pashtuns, and the history of the country has been in part the complicated narrative of power conflicts between different Pashtun factions. For example, for much of the 19th century Herat, with its own Pashtun leadership, was virtually autonomous. Afghanistan began to emerge as a nation-state (in the western sense) only in the 1880s, under Amir Abdur Rahman ("the Iron Amir"), who came to power with British support. By building a powerful regular army which could confront the tribes he was able to bring the whole of the country under the control of Kabul; the political integrity of Afghanistan was created and maintained by force of arms (the arms being

provided by British India). Abdur Rahman's cruelties and genocides were prodigious (Mousavi 1998). In 1919 Abdur Rahman's grandson Amanullah achieved *de facto* independence from the British Indian sphere of influence, and embarked upon an ambitious programme of social change and modernisation, many of these reforms being modelled on Ataturk's Turkey and Reza Shah's Persia, which included plans to institute constitutional monarchy, with an elected National Assembly, the emancipation of women, and compulsory education. These proposals precipitated the uprising in 1929 which led to the overthrow of Amanullah, and for a few months a non-Pashtun occupied the throne of Kabul, the Tajik ruler called Bacha Saqao, soon to be deposed and executed by Nader Shah, who was in turn assassinated in 1933. For the following 40 years the country was ruled by Zahir Shah, who came to the throne at the age of nineteen. His successor Daud Khan was also from the royal family. Even in the communist era Pashtuns dominated things: there were two rival communist parties, Khalq and Parcham, the former drawn largely from a rural Pashtun background, and the latter from urban middle-class Pashtuns. The failure of Rabbani's coalition government (1992-1996) may have been due in part to the fact that he was not Pashtun but Tajik. The Taliban continue the pattern, for they are also largely recruited from young Pashtuns, a fact which explains the perhaps unexpected support for Taliban amongst some Pashtun exiles living in the West.

The following table sets out the rulers of Kabul since 1880
(the beginning of Afghanistan's modern era)

Amir Abdul Rahman	1880-1901	President Hafizullah Amin	1979-1980
Amir Habibullah Khan	1901-1919	President Babrak Karmal	1980-1986
King Amanullah	1919-1929	President Najibullah	1986-1992
Bacha Saqao	1929-1930	President Rabbani	1992-1996
Nader Khan	1930-1933	Mullah Mohammad Omar	1996-present
King Zahir	1933-1973		
President Daud Khan	1973-1978		
President Taraki	1978-1979		

However, if military control of the country was in the hands of Pashtuns, the bureaucratic infra-structure was largely run by Tajiks. In Kabul, the royal family and aristocracy, Pashtuns, were highly "Persianised", with Dari (Afghan Persian) as their principal language. The lingua franca and the language of government and the bureaucracy was also Dari. Pashto only became an official language, along with Dari, in 1933.[2]

It appears that Pashtuns and Tajiks had arrived at a working compromise in a shared nation state, perhaps comparable to that enjoyed by different ethnicities in Switzerland, but the conflicts of recent times have raised many questions about this accommodation in the past, especially with respect to other large ethnic minorities such as Hazaras and Uzbeks. Today, the people of Afghanistan are faced with cultural and political fragmentation, in which western, northern and south/southeastern regions might be expected to gravitate towards their neighbouring states, Iran, Uzbekistan & Tajikistan, and Pakistan. Confronted with political fragmentation along ethnic lines one wonders what kind of unity ever prevailed in the past. What sort of structures held this country together? Was it a unity that was imposed and maintained by force, or was there a real degree of social consensus? These are fundamental questions we need to ask when considering the future of Afghanistan.

1.2 MUSIC PROFILE

Before the civil war started in 1978 the people of Afghanistan enjoyed a rich music culture, showing considerable diversity. One could distinguish (a) the art music of Kabul and other cities such as Herat, Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif, (b) modern genres of popular music created at and disseminated by Afghanistan's only radio station, Radio Kabul, later called Radio Afghanistan, (c) a plethora of regional "folk music" styles characteristic of various ethnic groups inhabiting different part of the country. The existence of a number of genres of religious recitation and singing must also be mentioned here, though they do not fall within the Afghan category of "music", most obviously because they do not involve the playing of musical instruments, a matter considered in more detail below.

1.2.1 Afghan art music

Afghans believe, with some justification, that music from their part of the world had a significant influence on the classical music of North India. It was a two-way process. In the 1860s Amir Sher Ali Khan invited classically trained musicians from North India to be his court musicians in Kabul. In due course their descendants established a distinct form of Afghan art music. The main genre is the *ghazal*, an Arabic word, which refers to one of the principal forms used in Persian and Pashto poetry, constructed of a series of couplets following a particular rhyme scheme. *Ghazal* also indicates a musical form for the singing of this kind of poetry, a form which is also well-established as a 'light-classical' genre of Indian music. The Kabuli *ghazal* generally uses Persian texts, often from the great poets of the Persian language such as Hafez, Sa'adi, and Bedil, and much of this poetry has a strong spiritual and mystical content. The music is based on the *rags* (melodic modes) and *tals* (metrical cycles) of Indian music, but has certain distinct features, notably the repetitive use of fast instrumental sections interpolated between units of text, a characteristic which can be linked to Pashtun music (Baily 1988:66). Since at least the 1920s it has been usual for the *ghazal* singer to accompany himself with the hand-pumped Indian harmonium *('armonia),* backed by a small group including *rubab* (a plucked lute, the national instrument of Afghanistan), *tabla* (drum pair), and often bowed lutes such as *sarangi* and *delruba,* and the tanpura drone. Apart from the *rubab* all these instruments have been adopted from North India.

1.2.2 Popular radio music

Radio broadcasting in Afghanistan was initiated in 1925 during the reign of Amanullah. The radio station was destroyed in 1929 in the uprising against his modernist policies, and there was no serious attempt to resume radio transmissions until Radio Kabul was officially opened in 1940, with German equipment and technical assistance.[3] From this time the radio station started to take over from the royal court as the main centre of musical patronage and institutional sponsor of new developments in music, employing many of the important musicians in the country on its staff. The stated aims of the radio station were to spread the message of the Holy Koran, to reflect the national spirit, to perpetuate the

treasures of Afghan folklore, and to contribute to public education. The government saw radio as the best and quickest way to communicate to and inform the population of its policies and development programmes.

During World War II broadcasting was seriously hampered by difficulties in obtaining new equipment or spares from Germany. An effective broadcasting service that could be received in most parts of the country was not established until the mid-1940s. Ownership of radio receivers was very limited and to ensure the dissemination of radio broadcasts, receiver appliances in a number of cities were linked to loudspeaker systems in their main streets. They broadcast the news, music, and other programmes, to a predominantly male audience in the public places that were the domain of men. In the 1960s a new radio station was built in the outskirts of Kabul, and Radio Afghanistan was launched.

Afghan popular music originated in response to the need to create a style suitable for radio broadcasting. The regional music of mixed Pashtun-Tajik areas near Kabul (such as Parwan) provided the models on which the new popular music broadcast by the radio station was built, bringing together Dari or Pashto texts, the Pashtun musical style, and North Indian theory and terminology.

The development of Afghan popular music took place with the assistance of master musicians *(ustads)*, descendants of Indian court musicians, whose knowledge of Indian music theory and terminology and high standards of performance were important for organising small ensembles and large orchestras at the radio station. They played a key role in training musicians, both professionals and amateurs.

Many new songs in the popular style were created by composers and musicians working at the radio station. Others were originally regional folk songs (either brought by provincial singers to the radio station, or actually recorded by station staff making collecting trips to different parts of the country) and performed in the popular style. In this way many of the folk songs of Afghanistan were given a new lease of life by radio broadcasting (Baily 1981). There was also an input from the Indian and Pakistani films regularly shown in the cinemas of Afghanistan, and from the popular musics of other neighbouring countries such as Iran and Tajikistan, via radio, 78rpm records, and personal contact.

Afghanistan had little in the way of formal music education and music as such was not part of the primary or secondary school curricula. Some school teachers (women as well as men) were themselves keen amateur musicians, and might organise informal musical activities for their pupils, such as occasional concerts to invited audiences to display the children's talents (especially in singing). There was little in the way of conservatories or schools of music, university music departments, arts councils, national sound archives, or organizations protecting composers' and musicians' rights. The radio station in Kabul played a crucial role as the national centre for musical activity, as well as functioning as the national broadcasting station, with all the demands for scheduling and time-keeping that role demanded. It was in part a conservatory, providing permanent posts for musicians and composers, and it had record and tape archives.[4] Radio Afghanistan was a bastion of modernism, and its institution led to considerable upgrading in the status of musicians and singers, male and female, professional and amateur. In some cases they came to enjoy "star" status.

The singer Ahmad Zahir is a good example of the process. He was from an aristocratic family (Mohammadzai), and his father, Dr Zahir, was for a short time Prime Minister. The family was wealthy and cosmopolitan. Ahmad Zahir represented the most westernised form of Afghan music at the time (1970s); he played the electric organ, accompanied by instruments such as trumpet, electric guitar and trap drum set, instruments not available to the average amateur enthusiast. He was murdered in Kabul in 1979, and his funeral cortege was followed by many hundreds of grief-stricken women fans weeping and wailing. His recordings, re-released on many CDs, are very popular amongst Afghan exiles in the West.

The new respectability conferred by radio was most remarkably shown by the way it allowed a number of women singers to achieve fame. Hitherto, women who sang in public (as in the theatre) were closely associated, at least in the minds of the people, with prostitution. Now, a number of women from highly respectable families came forward. The best known was Ferida Mahwash, who worked as a secretary at the radio station. Her singing career began in the 1960s, and in 1976 she was given the honorific title of *Ustad* (master musician) by the Afghan government.

Radio had a further significance. Writing in the 1970s American ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin discussed the role of radio in Afghan cultural life:

> *Radio Afghanistan is one of the few unifying factors in a country unusually marked by ethnic and linguistic fragmentation... For the Afghan villager or nomad... the radio has drastically reduced the restrictions on the scope of his imagination... he shares in the music of the Kabul studio, one of the few manifestations of an emerging pattern of national values and expression that may eventually comprise a pan-ethnic, distinctively Afghan society (*SLOBIN *1974:248).*

Building on Slobin's ideas I have argued that the creation and broadcasting of a style of popular music that brought together elements of the two principal music systems, Pashtun and Tajik, played an important role in creating and expressing an Afghan national identity in the 20th century (Baily 1994). If so, this can be identified as one of the structures that held ethnically diverse Afghanistan together in the past.

1.2.3 Regional musics

Afghanistan is home to a variety of regional musics characteristic of the ethnic groups inhabiting the different parts of the country, though there are many similarities between them. The various regions have close relationships with the music of adjacent countries: Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Pashtun regional music is of particular importance, forming the basis of the radio popular music style. Song-texts are in many cases "traditional", i.e. with no known progenitor, but there are also many local poets whose work in song form enjoys local fame. The national instrument is the *rubab,* a short-necked lute with sympathetic strings. Long-necked lutes such as *tanbur, dutar* and *dambura* are widespread, as are bowed lutes like the *sarinda, sarang* and *ghaichak.* There are, however, very few instrument types, which are exclusive to Afghanistan, the *tanbur* and 14-stringed Herati *dutar* being two examples. Women's domestic music is of great importance. There are genres of song accompanied by the *daireh* (frame drum), and the drum is also used to play rhythms for dancing. Another widespread kind of music is that for *sorna* and *dohol* (shawm and double-headed frame drum), which has an important role in village wedding festivities for staging processions and for group dancing by men.

Many professional musicians in Afghanistan are from low status ethnic minorities whose main occupation is barber. In Pashtun areas such groups are called *Dom,* in the west, *Gharibzadeh.* Typically, they perform shawm and drum music, but often they play the instruments of urban music, *'armonia, rubab, tabla*, and many others. The low social status of hereditary musicians makes them vulnerable to exploitation. There are also many amateur musicians, often from better-educated backgrounds.

1.2.4 Song texts

It would be hard to over-emphasise the importance of poetry in Afghan culture, irrespective of what language we are dealing with. This is a country with important literary poetic traditions that go back many centuries. The Persian language poetic tradition, shared with Iran, is of great significance, and includes all the great poets of that language. Pashto poetry also has considerable historical depth. Poetry is a national preoccupation and many Afghans consider themselves to be poets. Structurally, there is a close relationship between poetry and music, an issue examined in detail by Sakata (1983). Poetry calls for special modes of recitative performance, and in one sense music is simply a vehicle for the delivery of text.

Song texts in Afghanistan in the past dealt with a rather limited range of topics. Love songs predominated, with themes of unrequited love being very important, with frequent allusion to the Leyla and Majnoon story. The rose and the nightingale constitute two central symbols in this poetry.[5] What is generally lacking in traditional Afghan song texts is topicality, dealing with politics, and containing accounts of real life. The texts are therefore very different to those in some other parts of the world, which deal with current events (such as calypso) or with personal experience (such as blues).

1.3 RELIGIOUS RECITATION, CHANTING AND SINGING

In Afghan thinking about sound art a basic distinction is made between "music" and other types of vocal performance, which are deemed quite separate from music. The Persian word for music is *musiqi,* derived from the Greek *mousike.* In the Afghan view, the concept of music is closely linked with musical instruments, either played by themselves for what we would term in English "instrumental music", or to accompany singing. Unaccompanied singing in itself is not labelled as "music". This system of classification explains how it is that some kinds of vocal performance are considered to be quite separate from music.

The best example of this is recitation of the Holy Koran. While value is attached to a mellifluous voice, this kind of performance is usually considered (in Afghanistan) to have nothing to do with music. This contrasts with the situation in Egypt, where a relationship between Koranic recitation and music is clearly recognised. In Cairo, some reciters of the Holy Koran *(qari)* consult musicians about the details of particular melodic modes *(maqam)* in order to enhance the effectiveness of their vocal art.

Koranic recitation is perhaps a special case, for the Holy Koran is regarded as literally the Word of God miraculously conveyed to His Prophet, Mohammad, and the language is Arabic, as is the *azan* (the Call to Prayer). There are other kinds of vocal performance of a religious kind, such as the Sufi ritual of *zikr,* the Recollection of the Names of God, in which short sacred texts in Arabic are chanted by a group of Sufis, combined with forceful expiration and inspiration of the breath and vigorous rhythmic movements of the body, altogether contributing to a state of ecstasy. Such an activity, while undoubtedly *musical* to the western commentator is not regarded as a manifestation of *musiqi* by Afghans. Around the circle of *zikr* reciters one, two or more singers walk slowly, singing religious poetry in Persian in praise of Prophet Mohammad. Songs of this kind are called *na't.* They may also be sung on special days (such as Prophet Mohammad's Birthday) in the mosque. And for Shi'a members of the Afghan community, of which there are many in certain parts of the country, practices for mourning in the month of Muharram involve yet other kinds of solo and group singing (*rowzeh, nowheh, manqasat* and *mursia),* also conceived of as quite separate from music.

However, the situation in the past was a little more complicated than this account so far indicates, for in Kabul and occasionally in other parts of the country we find adherents of the Chishti Sufi order whose ritual of the spiritual concert *(sama)* at certain shrines did involve the use of standard musical instruments (*'armonia, tabla, rubab,* etc.) to accompany the singing of religious texts, usually mystical *ghazals.* The Chishti Order is very prominent in Pakistan and India, and the music known as *qawwali* has in recent years become well known in the West through the concert tours of great singers such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan or the Sabri Brothers. *Qawwali* as such was not performed in Afghanistan, but something quite similar went on regularly in a few Chishti Sufi lodges in Kabul. According to Chishti belief, music is *qaza-ye ruh*, "food for the soul", a form of spiritual nourishment.

2. MUSIC CENSORSHIP

2.1 THE AFGHAN LEGAL SYSTEM IN THE PAST

Throughout most of its turbulent history Afghanistan has been a country with an autocratic style of political control. Along with that went a lack of freedom of expression. In 1964 a new constitution was set in place, which attempted to institute a form of constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy. There was a new Press Law in 1965 (Hyman 1983:57) and a number of new privately owned newspapers and magazines began to be published. In this period there was comparative freedom of speech. Elections were held in 1966, when Babrak Karmal, leader of a subsequent communist regime, was elected as a member of parliament. At the local level there may well have been songs in support of one candidate or another, but Radio Afghanistan itself, run by the Ministry for Information and Culture, presumably censored such materials.

2.2 THE NEW REPUBLIC

In 1973 Mohammad Daud staged a *coup d'etat* in which he seized power from his cousin and brother-in-law, King Zahir. The King was out of the country at the time and the coup resulted in comparatively little bloodshed, but it was this action which paved the way for the communist takeover in 1978 and all the miseries that were to follow. The five years of Daud's presidency were characterised by relative stability but the tightening of state control over the media was immediate. The free press was closed down, as were privately owned theatres.

This is the time when I and my wife Veronica Doubleday lived for two years in the city of Herat and carried out the extensive ethnomusicological fieldwork on which this report is based (Baily 1988, Doubleday 1988). We observed, and participated in, a rich "life of music" at that time. There were many kinds of music,

embracing a number of contrasts: city and village, professional and amateur, men and women, solo and ensemble, sacred and secular.

Most live music performance took place in the context of weddings, with separate parties for men and women. In the city a band of male musicians would give a programme of music lasting for 6-8 hours, which would include serious *ghazals,* popular songs from the radio, a few local Herati songs, music for dancing, and music for comedy routines. The women's wedding party, in an adjoining courtyard, would be entertained by one of Herat's groups of professional women musicians, singing and playing *'armonia, tabla* and *daireh.* Their engagement would last for 24 hours, starting at six in the evening and with a few hours break for sleep at the house of where the women's party was taking place, and continuing next day till six o'clock. Music was also played at the birth of a son or daughter, and to celebrate male circumcision, but not in connection with death, when music is considered to be completely inappropriate.

The month of fasting, Ramazan, was particularly rich in musical performance, with half a dozen restaurants and cafes offering nightly performances, often with bands of musicians from Kabul hired for the month. There was the Herat theatre, run by the local office of the Ministry for Information and Culture, with its own troupe of actors, playwrights, directors and musicians, which presented nightly dramas and concerts of music throughout the year. In the spring, over a period of 40 days, there were regular country fairs, with tented teahouses and small bands of musicians. And there were private music parties of many kinds, whether women's gatherings in the build-up to the big wedding celebrations, dinner parties, after-dinner parties, and simple get-togethers of music enthusiasts for the sake of having fun. These small parties presented the best performance context for what was essentially a form of chamber music, never intended for the concert platform in the western sense.

Listening to radio broadcasts from Kabul was an important part of daily life for many people, and this brought them up to date with the latest popular songs. They could also listen to music from many other places, Iran, India, Pakistan, and Central Asia. Audio cassettes were beginning to become commonplace. In Kabul there were companies such as Afghan Music Centre, with quite sophisticated studios and new recording equipment imported from Europe. This com-

pany recorded many of the famous singers and instrumentalists of Afghanistan. In a city like Herat there was also a local cassette industry, with local artistes recorded on very inferior cassette equipment. Their tapes were reproduced by endless copying of the master, and sold, with no printed labels, in specialist shops in the bazaar.

Western popular music enjoyed a certain degree of exposure on Radio Afghanistan; one night in Kabul in 1973 I recorded a set of Chuck Berry songs off air. Amongst students in Kabul there was certainly a following for music of this kind, and I heard of various rock bands amongst the younger generation of the westernised elite (western instruments cost a lot of money in Afghanistan). Hotels and restaurants catering for the flood of young western tourists at the time provided some western music for their clientele, but in general it would seem that the people who ran these businesses had found that hiring a few local musicians was a far more attractive lure for visitors than canned western pop. In Herat there was little sign of a western popular music influence. Inputs of popular music culture came predominantly from Indian films.

The question of music and religion in Herat at that time has been discussed at length in my book (Baily 1988). While there continued to be reservations about music as a profession, and hereditary musicians had in general a low social standing, censure of music was seen as a thing of the past. "Who thinks about such things today?" as one musician put it. If the government saw radio as a way to inform the population about its policies and development programmes it would seem that music on radio was achieving just that. Radio music placed its listeners in that modern world of which the government aspired to be part.

2.3 JIHAD PERIOD

For the 14 years that the communists were in power in Kabul, with Soviet military backing for most of that time, a number of Mujahideen groups based in Pakistan and Iran were engaged in *jihad* ("Holy War") against the government. Several million refugees sought shelter in Pakistan and Iran. Little research has been conducted on music within Afghanistan in this period. The succession of communist governments in general supported music, which they saw as indicative of the type of secular society they believed they had established. The televi-

sion network already planned in President Daud's time came into being, with a central TV station in Kabul and local stations in some provincial cities where local radio stations were also set up. These media were under the control of the Ministry for Information and Culture, which had controlled broadcasting from its inception in the 1940s. Certainly the Ministry exercised tight control on what was broadcast. Some singers were ready to sing songs in praise of the new regime; others were not, and felt it best to go into exile. This era is today a source of embarrassment for a number of singers who stayed on in Kabul, only to leave later, for many Afghans consider that they compromised themselves.

Raja Anwar's book *The Tragedy of Afghanistan* provides a number of valuable insights into the role of music in the early days of communist rule. He describes how in 1979 Taraki obtained a fatwa from a sympathetic religious establishment "which declared that *jihad* against religious reactionaries who followed in the footsteps of the *Akhwan-ul-Muslimi* [the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt] had full religious sanction" (Anwar 1989:150). In other words, the communists declared a holy war against those who had declared holy war upon the government. He continues:

> *The official media were also directed to use the fatwa to attack the Mullahs and their campaign. On TV (whose transmissions did not go beyond Kabul), it was made the basis of skits, songs and plays. One chorus broadcast regularly by both TV and radio had the refrain:*
>
> *LANNAT BAR TU AYE AKHWAN-UL-SHAITAN*
>
> *(May the curse of God be upon you, you brothers of Satan) (ibid.)*

Concerts were also held in support of the Taraki regime. Anwar describes one memorable performance:

> *On the evening of 14 September [1979], a concert of Afghan folk music was in progress on the lawns of Afghan Music, an academy next to the Indonesian embassy and barely a kilometre away from the presidential palace. Such evenings were regularly organised by the Khalq government to propagate Party programmes and achievements. As was customary, the stage was profusely decorated with large pho-*

tographs of the 'great leader'. Popular artists... were busy singing the praises of the Revolution and the Party. A well-known comic, who was acting as master of ceremonies, was dutifully leading the crowd into chants of 'Long Live Taraki' and 'Long Live Amin' whenever a new performer appeared on stage. At about 6.30 p.m., when the concert was at its climax, tanks from the 4th Armoured Corps moved into the city, taking positions in front of important building and occupying major squares. The rumble of the tanks on the roads so unnerved the organizers of the concert and the artists that they ran away helter-skelter, leaving even their musical instruments behind. (ibid. 172)

Hafizullah Amin's coup to depose President Taraki had just begun. Two of Amin's supporters, Taroon and Nawab, who were killed in the coup, were later commemorated: "special songs were commissioned for radio and TV extolling their 'great deeds'" (ibid. 171). Anwar noted that a recording of Ravi Shankar performing *Rag Malhar* on the *sitar* was often played over the air when a change of regime came about; it was so used when Daud came to power, and when Taraki and Amin were toppled. *Rag Malhar* is believed to bring rain (ibid. 100).

It seems that music in Kabul had become quite westernised. *The International Herald Tribune* for 6/2/86 ran an article about one private engagement party in Kabul:

There was disco dancing, an ear-splitting band, proud parents and the nervous young couple - all the elements of an engagement party anywhere in the world. Then there were a few extras: the armed soldiers at the entrance to the gloomy hotel, the slick band leader singing "Our Heroic Party", and the portrait of Afghanistan's president, Babrak Karmal, gazing over the crowded ballroom... At the party for Roya and Kamran, the future student bride and groom, Kabul's young men eagerly went through their disco paces - with other young men. Although they have long given up the Moslem custom of covering up their eyes and legs, the women stayed in a corner by themselves, swaying to the deafening music. "Yes, this is quite modern, it is not an arranged marriage," shouted the bride-to-be's father, Colonel Nur Ahmad, over the din. "Nowadays, young people meet first and then consult their parents about marriage," said the colonel, who said he taught military subjects at Kabul University... [The] lead singer of the band at the engagement party, said his five-piece group was booked for functions like this most nights.

Besides Western music and tunes from Indian movies, the band's repertoire includes patriotic songs about the Communist Party and against the counterrevolutionaries, as Kabul calls the Moslem rebels. "I always try to topple the counterrevolutionaries in my poems and songs," the singer told government officials acting as interpreters for visiting foreign journalists.

Amongst the exiles in Iran and Pakistan conditions were very different to how they were in Afghanistan with regard to music. In Iran there was strict censorship of music from the time of Khomeini's revolution in 1979, when the Ayatollah was reported to have denounced it as "the opium of youth". The ban on music lasted until the end of the long war between Iran and Iraq, and in retrospect was justified in terms of deference to those who had lost their young men in the fighting. In Pakistan things were rather more complicated. Pakistan has a great diversity of regional musics. It has a film music industry, and shares the classical traditions of North India. Most of the Afghan refugees lived in camps not far from the border with Afghanistan. These camps were connected to the various Mujahideen parties, and were under the control of mullahs, who banned any kind of music in the camps, not only live performance and listening to audio cassettes, but even listening to music on the radio. One reason given was that most of the people living in these miserable conditions had lost family members in the war and were in a state of mourning, which made the playing of any kind of music inappropriate. The roots of the Taliban movement lie in these camps.

For a variety of reasons many Afghan refugees chose to live outside the camps. This included a number of refugee musicians who wanted to continue with their normal occupation. I met a number of them in Peshawar in 1985 when making a film (Baily 1985). Afghan musicians in Peshawar were mainly Pashto speakers, and they had been admitted into the Pakistani musician community, which was also Pashto speaking. As musicians, their main source of income came from playing at Pakistani (rather than Afghan) wedding parties, and they travelled large distances to make a living. In the wedding context they would provide the usual love songs in Pashto that were considered appropriate for such festivities, rather than political songs. The Afghan style of Pashtun music enjoyed a considerable vogue in Pakistan because it was rather more sophisticated and informed by art music than the Pakistani variety.

In 1985 I attended an Afghan wedding party in a poor suburb of Peshawar where many refugees were living. The musicians were well known and usually

well paid, but here were performing for no payment, as an act of charity. As was usual, they had microphones and a PA system. A few minutes after the music started there was a loud banging on the door of the courtyard where the performance was taking place, and two mullahs were admitted. I was recording the music at the time and so caught the following exchange on tape:

Mullah: *We have come as refugees from Afghanistan, we left everything behind but we should not leave behind our honour and customs. Don't play that thing because God and the Prophet will be offended. You play these things on happy occasions like weddings and circumcisions but it's not right to play here, we've come as refugees and if other people hear us [they'll say] it's just not right to hear such merry making. Turn it down! Because other people may be offended and your party may turn sour. I can tell you this thing is forbidden because it is sorud [music]. Now you've come here, all of you together, you must cut the loudspeaker altogether. If you play too loud the whole neighbourhood will stay up late and they will miss their [morning] prayers. And then God will ask you on Judgement Day why were you playing that game, and so putting the whole community to such inconvenience?*

Singer: *The best thing would have been if you had discussed this amongst yourselves before inviting me. I am a radio and television singer, wherever I go this thing comes with me...*

Mullah: *Allright, we understand it is a happy occasion, we're not going to stop you but cut the speakers off completely.*

Singer: *Okay*

Mullah: *... although God and the Prophet have forbidden this thing.*

Singer: *Well Sir, it is the custom.*

Mullah: *Any wedding that has got you in it is not going to be a good wedding because the angels are not going to come and visit. Cut the speakers!*
Musician: *Haji Sahib, it's finished, it's the end, the subject is dead, and we are going to start our concert. These people you refer to are our neighbours, they*

are not strangers, what are you talking about? ... And if you feel like that about it, you go along to the radio station and the television station and tell them to stop playing music...

In the end the wedding continued with the sound system switched off.

This incident illustrates several themes in the censorship of music by Afghans. It shows (a) the direct interference by mullahs in the performance of music, (b) the idea that music is inappropriate, implicitly (though not stated outright) because people are in a state of mourning, (c) that listening to music will cause people to neglect their prayers, and (d) tension over the matter of amplification. Peshawar had a thriving cassette industry and many cassettes of Mujahideen songs were recorded by Afghan musicians. Little is known about these recordings, but some were long epics recounting the exploits of particular Mujahideen groups and their military campaigns. It seems that many of these cassettes were bought by Mujahideen fighters and taken back to Afghanistan. One such cassette in my possession contains a 40 minute epic about a particular Mujahideen group operating in the north of Afghanistan. At one point the singer declaims:

It was in the dark of night when the Mujaheds were fighting
It was difficult to tell between friend and foe
In the morning it was time for the third attack
"Allah O Akbar" [God is Great] could be heard amongst the bombardment
[Instrumental section]
The Mujahideen advance into the district
And they are happy for the blood they shed in martyrdom
When they made their third attack on the town

Following the line describing the Mujahideen advance there is a prolonged interlude of imitations of gunfire played on the *tabla* drums. This is one of the few musical innovations of the war! Sometimes the sounds of genuine gunfire, presumably recorded at the scene of a battle, were mixed into a song in the studio.

Within Afghanistan the Mujahideen directed some of their anger against those they saw as supporting the communists:

*Fundamentalist rebels are not only the major enemies of the Soviets, but also of music, education, art and literature, which they consider interventions of the devil. Musicians like Fazal Ghani and Khan Qarra Baghi and the well-known TV woman presenter Saima Akbar were all killed by the rebels after 1980. Dr Mohammed Usman, the only Afghan novelist of note, survived through sheer luck after an attack. It can be safely said that the rebels have launched a crusade against modern knowledge (*ANVAR *1989:241).*

2.4 RABBANI PERIOD

The Soviet Army withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 and the communist government they left in Kabul fell to the Mujahideen in 1992. The last President, Najibullah, former head of KHAD, Afghanistan's equivalent to the KGB, sought asylum in the UN compound, where he remained until the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996 and executed him. In this period, after the communists and before the Taliban, Afghanistan was ruled by a very weak government made up of opposing Mujahideen factions, under President Rabbani, one of the Mujahideen leaders, and a Tajik himself. But for the inhabitants of Kabul the war was not over; they were now subjected to a bewildering and deadly series of alliances battling for control of the city, with long-distance rocketing by one faction or another that reduced much of Kabul to rubble. Up to this time Kabul had survived the war more or less intact, though with a greatly expanded population of internally displaced persons seeking refuge from the armed conflict going on in other parts of the country. Many Kabuli musicians and their families who had survived the war now left because the musicians quarter was frequently hit by rockets, though whether by design or not is unclear. Most of the casualties of the bombardment were civilians rather than military personnel.

I visited Herat for seven weeks in the middle of this period of instability, in 1994, under UN auspices. Herat was controlled by Ismail Khan, a Rabbani supporter and a highly successful Mujahideen commander during the *jihad.* He was known for his commitment to social programmes during the war, and had given strong support for education (for girls as well as boys) in areas of western Afghanistan under Mujahideen control. Herat under Ismail Khan was a city in a condition of deep austerity, although the economy was booming with the return of wealthy businessmen who had been in exile in Iran. Senior religious figures

had an important say in how the city was run, and the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice had been established. Various edicts affecting the day-to-day lives of ordinary people were issued. For example, Heratis were keen pigeon fanciers, and many men kept pigeon lofts on the roofs of their houses in the old city, and would fly their flocks of birds as a hobby, catching them again with large nets. This activity was banned, on the grounds that it could lead to men spying into the courtyards of their neighbours' houses and observing their womenfolk unveiled. When the ban was announced on local television the point was emphasised by several pigeons having their necks wrung in front of the camera. This was a warning as to what would happen to the birds of anyone apprehended indulging in this illicit sport. Likewise, there was a ban on flying kites from the rooftops, in case young men were on the lookout for girls.

There was also heavy censorship of music, but a certain amount of musical activity was allowed. Professional musicians had to apply for a licence, which specified the kinds of songs they could perform, namely songs in praise of the Mujahideen and songs with texts drawn from the mystical Sufi poetry of the region, of which there was a great deal. This cut out a large amount of other music, such as love songs and music for dancing. The licences also stipulated that musicians must play without amplification, an idea we already encountered in Peshawar in 1985.[6] Music could be performed by male musicians at private parties indoors, but Herat's women professional musicians were forbidden to perform, and several were briefly imprisoned for having transgressed this ordinance. Technically, male musicians could perform at wedding parties, but experience had shown that often in such cases the agents of the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, religious police, had arrived to break up the party. They would confiscate the instruments, which were usually returned to the musicians some days later when a fine or bribe had been paid. Veronica Doubleday, who visited Herat in March 1994, reported just such an incident when a band of musicians was playing at a country fair held in the grounds of a Sufi shrine. The performance was stopped; the instruments were confiscated, and recovered the next day. Yet on occasion musicians were called upon to play (without payment) at official receptions for honoured guests, such as a delegation from Iran. Thus professional musicians could hardly make a living from performing music. They depended on the generosity of their long-standing patrons, often

from the wealthy business/merchant class, who would pay them to play at house parties, or simply give them handouts to help them.

There was very little music on local radio or television. Due to technical problems and shortages of fuel to power the generator, broadcasting time was anyway severely curtailed, to about one hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. Occasionally a musical item would be transmitted. If a song was broadcast on television one did not see the performers on screen, but a vase of flowers was shown instead. Names of performers were not announced on radio or television. But I was pleased one morning to hear on Herat radio a *ghazal* sung by a celebrated local singer who had died some years before, the recording of which I had presented to the radio station. It is clear that the religious lobby was exercising tight control over music, but not in anything like as severe a form as the Taliban were to display when they took Herat a year later. The *dutar* maker had reopened his business in one of the main streets, and resumed the making and repair of musical instrument, though keeping an eye open for the religious police. A *rubab* maker was also active. The audio cassette business continued, with a number of shops in the bazaars of Herat selling music cassettes, some of Herati musicians.

Ironically, early in 1995 three well-known Herati musicians were issued with passports by the Herat authorities to travel to Paris to play at an important concert in the Théâtre de la Ville, and to make a CD for OCORA, part of Radio France. They were accompanied by a translator and de facto manager, who organised their travel to Europe. After visiting France, Switzerland and the UK they flew back to Tehran, and thence to Herat. This shows, I think, that the censorship of music was not initiated by the administration, but was forced upon it by powerful figures in the religious hierarchy who expected to be rewarded for their role in the prosecution of the *jihad.* Musicians could be sent abroad as cultural ambassadors, but their voices at home were stifled.

The censorship of music in Kabul at this time was less severe than in Herat; President Rabbani tried to set up an Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, but certain members of the government such as the celebrated Mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Masud did not support such strong measures to control the populace. In the dying days of the Rabbani period, before the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was appointed Prime Min-

ister in a new coalition government. He was the Pashtun leader of one of the most extreme Mujahideen parties (and recipient of copious supplies of US armaments, including the Stinger missiles which effectively defeated the Soviet Union), and his forces had been subjecting Kabul to a deadly rain of rockets over a period of months. He lost no time in closing Kabul's cinemas and banning music on radio and television. According to a report in the Pakistani newspaper *The Muslim* for July 15 1996, a government spokesman had said:

> *No music or musical instruments should be heard on radio or television... Any sort of music being played on air was illegal because it has a negative effect on peoples' [sic] psyches.*

At the time, Abdul Hafiz Mansoor, head of the state press agency Bakhtar commented:

> *The government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani tried to shut down cinemas and ban music when it came to power four years ago, but it proved to be an unrealistic ideal, which only lasted a few weeks... It's difficult and potentially dangerous to take away a few simple pleasures from people who live in a ruined city with no electricity, [or] running water and which comes under constant rocket attack (ibid.).*

2.5 TALIBAN AND CENSORSHIP

2.5.1 Origins and ideology of Taliban

The word *talib* means a theological student, a youth or young man who attends a *madressa* (theological college) for training in all aspects of Islam, which includes a detailed study of the complexities of religious law. The Taliban movement grew up in Pakistan, in a number of *madressas* near the border with Afghanistan where the majority of students were young Afghans. They were mostly, as one would expect, given the ethnic mix of the refugee population, Pashtuns, who had come from the refugee camps. A full account of the origins of the Taliban can be found in the books of Marsden (1998) and Rashid (2000).

The Taliban became a visible presence in the Afghan political scene when they took over Kandahar in 1994. Taliban leaders can hardly be described as students, and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan received strong backing from Pakistan, which wanted to restore law and order in Afghanistan so as to open up trade routes to Central Asia. The USA also gave support to the Taliban, seeing them as a useful check on Iran, and as helpful in developing oil pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan to Pakistan. Note that Ahmad Rashid's book is called *Taliban. Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia.*

The Taliban have enforced a number of social policies which are at variance with western notions of human rights. It is the treatment of women that seems to have most excited the critics in the West. The veiling of women in itself is perhaps not such an issue; outside Kabul most women in urban settings wore the *burqa* (or "tent"). But restrictions on women working, and on receiving education, have received a very bad press, especially regarding a city like Kabul where thousands of families have lost adult males and are consequently headed by women. Taliban rejection of the visual representation of animate beings, whether human or animal, leads to the rejection of all forms of visual media such as cinema, television, video, family photographs and representational painting. And the Taliban have banned music.

2.5.2 Edicts concerning music

With regard to music, the Taliban have themselves published pronouncements regarding its status. Ahmad Rashid reproduces a number of decrees published in December 1996, soon after the capture of Kabul, including the following that concern music (the English is the Taliban's, the added punctuation mine).

> **2** *To prevent music... In shops, hotels, vehicles and rickshaws cassettes and music are prohibited... If any music cassette found in a shop, the shopkeeper should be imprisoned and the shop locked. If five people guarantee [,] the shop should be opened [,] the criminal released later. If cassette found in the vehicle, the vehicle and the driver will be imprisoned. If five people guarantee [,] the vehicle will be released and the criminal released later.*
>
> **12** *To prevent music and dances in wedding parties. In the case of violation the head of the family will be arrested and punished.*

13 *To prevent the playing of music drum.7 The prohibition of this should be announced. If anybody does this then the religious elders can decide about it. (RASHID 2000:218-219)*

2.5.3 Reports of censorship in English language media

Western media were quick to seize on the banning of music and television as examples of Taliban policy, "Afghan zealots reign of terror. TV banned on pain of death," being a typical headline for an article about conditions in Herat, which fell to the Taliban in September 1995:

> *One of the first edicts issued by the Taliban... was to ban television. The local television station was closed and aerials pulled down from every house. To prove they were serious, the Taliban fighters made public examples of those caught defying the ban. They blackened the faces of offenders, tied video cassettes round their necks, and led them through the city on the end of a rope... The fighters have outlawed music, dancing, picnics and kite flying. Stereo systems, video cassette players and television sets have been destroyed in public and western books confiscated. Gun-wielding soldiers have broken up wedding parties, ordering festivities to stop (THE SUNDAY TIMES 24/3/96).*

Kabul fell to the Taliban in 1996. The BBC soon broadcast several programmes about conditions in the capital. In one, a middle-aged tabla player from the musicians' quarter was shown burying his drums in order to hide them, just as many people of Afghanistan bury armaments (BBC TV 7/12/96). Young Taliban from the *Amr Bil Marof Wa Nahi Anil Munkar* (Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice) are repeatedly described, driving around in their Hilux pickups, with armed men in the open backed vehicles on the lookout for miscreants. The image of "executed" audio and video tapes was also a favourite topic for the press:

> *One visible proof [of the ban] was the black and brown streamers hanging from poles and trees. They were the innards of cassettes that had been ripped out and*

"hanged" as a reminder to travellers of the ban imposed on music throughout their territory (THE NEWS 3/4/2000).

They hung television sets from lampposts in mock executions, and ripped the innards out of video and audio cassettes, putting the disembowelled casings on display (THE GUARDIAN 1/10/98).

Rahimullah Yusufzai's article in *Index on Censorship*, reprinted in *The News*, is particularly informative:

Those caught with music are reprimanded and their cassettes ripped apart. Some may be admonished with a stick - especially if they try to argue with the guards - and briefly lectured on the "evils of listening to music." According to former interior minister Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa, the idea behind the punishment is not to hurt but to reform (THE NEWS 3/4/2000).

Yusufzai reports that some of those caught with audio cassettes of music in their vehicles had been imprisoned for up to 40 days.

The Taliban produce their own cassettes of chanting and singing, with texts in praise of themselves, often mentioning by name those who have died for the cause. Yusufzai notes:

Taliban-approved cassettes are invariably plastered with images of rifles and rocket-launchers. They not only promote the Taliban's prowess in the battlefield but fulfil the government injunction that the taking and displaying of pictures of living creatures is un-Islamic (THE NEWS 3/4/2000).

These cassettes are available for purchase in the bazaar, although as one cassette-shop keeper said: "How many Taliban cassettes can I sell when only the Taliban buy them. Anyway, every Talib can chant, so what's the point of him buying a cassette with someone else's chanting?" (ibid.).

2.5.4 Personal testimony from Afghans

For various reasons it is difficult to collect first-hand statements about the censorship of music in Afghanistan. One reliable source, a man I have known for many years who visited Herat in 1998, provided the following account. I asked him about music in Herat during his recent visit (I have only slightly changed the English):

> *Music is not allowed. If somebody tells Taliban that in this house is wedding and they put stereo cassette, audio cassette, and there is a little dancing the Taliban come to the house and they say, "Who is the owner of this wedding?" They say, "I am the owner." They take him to office of* AMR BIL MAROF WA NAHI ANIL MUNKAR *[Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, the religious police]. The owner of this wedding, the leader of this wedding is carried to the office, they say, "Oh man, you know that this is not the time of music. This is not the time for dancing. We know that you had music and we heard your VCR or your stereo. We'll let you free but after this no music in the wedding for a certain time. Maybe one day you will have music [again], not now." And give him a paper to sign that I don't do anything any more, and let him to go.*

But if the host of the celebration refuses to sign the paper undertaking not to repeat the offence, or starts to argue, saying for example, "Music is good, without music we cannot make wedding," then he is likely to be imprisoned, for the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice is empowered to incarcerate people for a short time without trial. I asked my contact whether he had seen musical instruments being burnt. He replied that he had, and told me:

> *THE JAHRCHI [like a town crier], the man in a Taliban car, [came round] announcing: "Oh people, tomorrow at ten thirty in the morning you come to the stadium. We want to burn some music instruments and some hashish plants, and some stereo cassette and audio cassette and some toys." Okay, I heard this. When I heard this I said to myself I have to go. The next day I called somebody who has taxi, I go to stadium. At ten o'clock I went. There were about five or six hundred people, most of them came by force... "Come on, come on!" the Talib said. They were sitting on the terraces, you know the stadium has terraces. They came all together, making a circle. First they put the* DUTAR, RUBAB, 'ARMONIA, *and put gasoline on them and set fire to them. And then the stereo cassettes, audio cassettes, a lot of boxes of audio cassettes and video cassettes, they were burnt. All the*

music instruments like VCR and TV were burnt, and at the last time one hundred and fifty hashish plants was burnt too. Then the plastic toys, they were burnt. And [then they] said "ALLAH O AKBAR, [God is Great] ALLAH O AKBAR, ALLAH O AKBAR!"... I saw this burning, the plants, the toys, the music instruments, I saw with my eyes.

Another report received from a reliable source concerns two well-known professional musicians in a provincial city. The two musicians were apprehended at a wedding party playing lute type instruments. Both musicians are in their fifties. Some Taliban arrived at the wedding party and stopped the music. The two lute-type instruments they had been playing were broken, and the musicians beaten about the head with them. They were then imprisoned for some days, and released when their friends had paid the appropriate fine. This incident shows the lengths that some Taliban are ready to use to enforce the censorship of music. I have come across no reliable accounts of musicians being executed simply because of their profession, though a musician interviewed by Qasim Shah for *The News* for February 2 1999 claimed that, *"If you are a musician they will certainly kill you."* The journalist questioned a Taliban official in Peshawar, who denied any capital punishment for musicians, saying, *"If they refuse to abandon their profession despite our warnings we impose fines and confiscate their instruments."*

2.5.5 Taliban justifications for banning music

Taliban officials justify the ban by arguing that music has a corrupting influence on the sexes, distracting them from their real duties: to pray and to praise Allah. Many rank-and-file believe that those homes where Allah is most often praised would be most blessed. By the same yardstick, they are of the firm belief that homes and countries where music is played all the time would be cursed.
(THE NEWS 3/4/2000).

Western commentators like to attribute the Taliban view of music to fundamentalist Islam, but this is far too simplistic a view. There is no clear injunction within Islam against music, though the matter of the lawfulness of music has certainly been a matter of debate within Islam for many centuries. Islamic art musics represent some of the most sophisticated musics to be found anywhere in the

world. Taliban have received much financial support from Saudi Arabia, home of the Wahhabi sect of Islam, which certainly supports *sharia*, the religious law which sanctions punishments such as amputation of the hand of a convicted thief. Wahhabism rejects music and dances, but there is no ban on music in Saudi Arabia comparable to that in Afghanistan. For example, traditional Bedouin sword dances are an important part of the greeting ceremony on official occasions, and there are singers on Saudi terrestrial TV, including (sometimes) non-Saudi Arab women singers. Such performances tend to be shown late in the evening. There is a thriving business in the sale of cassettes and CDs but little in the way of concert life.

Another explanation for Taliban ideology is that it derives from the values of rural Pashtun society, but this does not really serve as a reasonable argument because Pashtuns have a great love of music, even if they have reservations about performing it themselves, and prefer to patronise hereditary musicians (*dom*, a barber-musician "caste") to provide this service for them. Another view I have heard is that music is banned at the moment because the time is not right, Afghanistan is in a state of prolonged mourning for the more than one million people killed in the last twenty years, and music is inappropriate at such a time. As we have seen, this was the justification for banning music in the refugee camps in Pakistan in the 1980s. Yet in areas that have been controlled by Taliban for several years and where peace prevails, there is no sign of a relaxation of the ban on music.

Taliban do not speak with one voice and do not represent a single point of view (Marsden 1998). Something that is forbidden today may be allowed tomorrow, and vice versa. The point is made clearly in a recent incident concerning football (soccer) matches in Kandahar. A Pakistani football team had been invited by the Governor of Kandahar, Mohammad Hasan, one of the regime's most senior leaders, to play several matches over a few days against a local Afghan team. Halfway through the third match armed Taliban religious police burst into the sports stadium, stopped the match, and arrested the Pakistani players who were wearing sports shorts rather than the baggy trousers prescribed by the authorities. The heads of the Pakistani players were shaved, a mark of shame usually reserved for petty thieves, and they were sent back to Pakistan in disgrace. The Governor later admitted the police had over-reacted. "They were our guests and should

not be treated like this" (*The Guardian* 18/7/00, my source for this story).[8] Many NGOs and other organisations providing humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan consider that high ranking Taliban officials may be relatively moderate but are limited in the policies they can put into effect by the fanaticism of the younger Talibs, who are the people in the front line of a war that still continues against Ahmad Shah Masud and the remnants of the Rabbani coalition. As a distinguished anthropologist and tireless champion of Afghan welfare put it: "If they get too moderate, the Taliban leaders lose the loyalty of these young boys who are their cannon fodder" (*The Observer* 12/7/98). Thus it is the radical students themselves who set these social agendas.

In my opinion, the Taliban are simply extremely puritanical and against any form of enjoyment or entertainment outside the sphere of religion. It has nothing directly to do with Islam, and one can find similar trends in other religions. A very good example is provided by that form of Christianity practised by The Society of Friends, or "Quakers", respected today for their charitable works and upholding of ethical principles such as pacifism. But in the early days of Quakerism (1600s), the Quakers were strongly opposed to music, as to all the arts. George Fox, founder of the movement, denounced such amusements and regularly attended country fairs "to preach against all sorts of musick" (Scholes 1955:853), although he also sanctioned the unaccompanied singing of psalms. The Quakers' *Yearly Meeting and Epistle* of 1846 speaks of the practice and acquisition of music as "unfavourable to the health of the soul" and as leading to "unprofitable and even pernicious associations, and, in some instances, to a general indulgence in the vain amusements of the world" (ibid.). What a contrast to the Sufi idea that music is "food for the soul"! Quaker attitudes against music began to weaken in the 1870s, and today Quakers are in general strongly enthusiastic about music, hold concerts in their meeting houses, and support musical activities at their own schools.

2.6 EVADING THE BAN ON MUSIC

Afghans are fiercely independent people and do not take kindly to the imposition of any kind of authority by force. And when something is prohibited it can have the effect of making it more attractive. It is only to be expected that many people inside Afghanistan manage to defy the ban on music. The western press has delighted in such stories, describing how the ban has:

> *...prompted music-lovers to find new means of dodging the restrictions. One ploy is to keep the few tolerated cassettes in the vehicle along with those containing the forbidden, instrument-based music. So tapes with recitations from the Holy Quran, Na'ats praising the Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) or Taliban political chants are kept handy to be played at checkpoints. Once out of sight, it is back to popular Pashto and Persian singers like Nashenas, Ahmad Zahir, Qamar Gulla [sic], Farhad Darya, Farzana, Shah Wali, Abdullah Moquray, Naghma and Mangal (The News 3/4/2000).*

Live performance undoubtedly goes on, too, especially in remote rural areas where Taliban have little presence. Musicians hide their instruments, they bury them in the ground or conceal them in other ways. Instruments that are apprehended are smashed or taken away to be burnt or otherwise "executed". But you cannot ban music forever, as the years of censorship of music in Iran after 1979 show. In simply disappears from sight, ready to reappear when the time is right. Ustad Mash'al, one of Afghanistan's greatest painters, remarked to me in Herat in 1994 regarding the censorship of music then in force, "Can you stop the birds singing?" Rahimullah Yusufzai, in his perceptive report entitled "How can one survive without music?" states:

> *The Taliban are mistaken if they believe they have killed music and purified the people of sinful thoughts with their censorship. Even in Kabul, music is still in the air – in the rhymes mothers sing to their children, in the schools where every lesson is taught in the form of rhythmic choruses to make it easier to understand. And the sound of the call to prayer from the loudspeakers on Kabul's mosques is a different kind of music. If not, Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) would not have insisted that Hazrat Bilal, the slave with the golden throat, should give the Azan, or call to prayer, in Medina as long as he was alive. Even the monotonous chants that the*

Taliban proudly sing in praise of their founder, Mulla Mohammad Omar, would be unpalatable if they didn't possess some rhyme or reason (THE NEWS 3/4/2000).

This brings us finally to the Taliban's own "chanting". Listening to audio cassettes of such material in my possession it is apparent that the texts (in Pashto) are of a religious nature, with frequent mention of the Taliban themselves, and of their *shahids* (martyrs) killed in fighting with anti-Taliban forces. There is heavy use of electronic devices such as delay and reverberation, much favoured in secular music of the region but which here could refer to the echoic acoustics of religious buildings, and there are sometimes two singers together, singing closely in unison. In terms of performance, the singing uses the melodic modes of Pashtun regional music, is nicely in tune, strongly rhythmic, and many items have the two-part song structure that is typical of the region. But without musical instruments it is not considered to be "music".

3. THE EFFECTS OF CENSORSHIP

3.1 THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN TRADITIONAL AFGHAN LIFE

The effects of censorship of music in Afghanistan are deep and wide-ranging for the Afghans, both inside and outside the country. What happens to a society when it is deprived of musical expression? There is no clear answer to this question, tied up as it is with the deep mystery of what music is, what its effects are, and its place in human development over thousands of years. The study of music making around the world shows that all human societies have music of one kind or another: musicality and music making appear to be fundamental aspects of what it means to be human. Like language, music is a human universal.

A human society deprived of music is likely to become to some extent dehumanised, lacking the personal emotional expression that comes from composing, performing and listening to music, and missing the joining of people in a common experience which makes them feel closer together. In the past, the people of Afghanistan were great music lovers and enjoyed a rich musical life. Music was an integral part of many rites of passage, such as celebrations of birth, circumcision (male only), and most important of all, marriage. Only death was a rite of passage lacking in musical expression. In these respects Afghanistan was like many other, probably most other, Muslim societies. Music, especially in the close-contact situation of live performance, was an integral part of social life.

3.2 NORMALITY AND IDENTITY

In the past, music was part of *normal* life, perhaps not an everyday event, though radio and cassette had made the experience of music much more readily available. It provided a degree of stability, of reassurance that life continues along familiar tracks. As Alan Lomax once wrote:

> *...the primary effect of music is to give the listener a feeling of security, for it symbolizes the place where he was born, his earliest childhood satisfactions, his religious experience, his pleasure in community doings, his courtship and his work - any or all of these personality shaping experiences (*LOMAX *1959:929).*

Today, the lack of music is symptomatic and indicative of an *abnormal* life. Normality, almost by definition, can never return to Afghanistan as long as the ban on music continues. And the problem runs deeper than that, for if we are right in believing that the music of Radio Afghanistan in the past played an important role in helping create an Afghan national identity (Baily 1994), through a shared music culture which brought together cultural elements of at least the two largest ethic groups, Pashtuns and Tajiks, then as long as the ban on music continues Afghans will be denied a very important force for bringing about reconciliation, both inside and outside the country. Afghan music retains the mixture of Pashtun and Tajik elements that it had before, and is available again to play its role in promoting a pan-Afghan identity. But for music to fulfil its potential for reconciliation there must be a revival of musical patronage, and if the past is anything to go by, that will have to be inspired by a new government initiative.

3.3 THERAPEUTIC ASPECTS OF MUSIC

Music provides a range of therapeutic possibilities for those who have suffered the traumas of warfare, the direct exposure to military force, the loss of family members, the dislocation, the uncertainty, the depression, the stress which occurs with prolonged experience of brutality. The work of music therapists in treating victims of torture stands at one end of the range of therapeutic possibilities (Dokter 1998). Music can also serve as a therapeutic intervention in a less structured way for groups of people. The positive benefits of concerts for the Afghan forced migrant community in Fremont (California) is recognised by some Afghan community leaders. There I heard ideas about music as an integrating force, bringing members of the community together, serving to maintain Afghan culture and identity. One community leader told me:

> *Music brings unity to the people, old and young together, and helps us not to lose our identity. We Afghans have some differences, but the concerts are the only times when we forget about everything, all people from different parts, different sects, different parts, we come and buy our tickets and go to the concerts (BAILY 2000a:12).*

In such cases the difference between therapy and reconciliation is hard to define.

3.4 THE FATE OF MUSICIANS

Many professional musicians in Afghanistan have been forced to migrate for their economic survival. Most of the exiles are to be found today in Pakistan and Iran. Hereditary professional musicians in Afghanistan were poorly educated and often non-literate. Few members of these musician families have made their way to Europe, North America or Australia, the main destinations for Afghans in the West. In contrast, many musicians who were originally from an amateur background, often middle class and well educated, have resettled in these western countries.

The plight of professional musicians still in Afghanistan was shown by the pathetic situation of the prematurely aged Kabuli musician who had buried his drums. Subtitled in English he said:

> *I can't pay rent. The owner has thrown me out. I can only afford one meal a day. The other two I have to forgo. My children are all hungry. They say to me, "Father, what should we do?" I tell them there's nothing I can do. I was young, now I'm old. You see these hands [that once played the drums], now they stretch out asking for help. I feel this is all very shameful and degrading (BBC TV 7/12/96).*

Barber-musicians remaining in Afghanistan can make their living from their barbering work, which in any case was usually their main source of income in the past, music being usually a secondary occupation. In other extended families of musicians some members often had other trades, such as motor mechanic, tailor, or shoemaker. Musicians outside Afghanistan at least have the opportunity to earn a living, mainly from playing at wedding parties, both for refugees and, in Pakistan at least, for the Pakhtun host community. But refugee musicians in Iran and Pakistan live in fear of deportation to Afghanistan, not so much because of

possible punishment by the authorities, but because they have no way to survive economically.

Unlike Afghan literature, which has a long written tradition (Persian and Pashto) with many centuries of historical background, Afghan music is essentially an oral tradition. There was very little in the way of formal musical education in the past. Despite the rhetoric of the master-pupil relationship, most musicians were essentially self-taught, growing up in musically rich environments, in the case of hereditary musicians, or more impoverished ones, in the case of amateurs (see Doubleday and Baily 1995). As with all oral traditions, a break in continuity can quickly lead to cultural loss. This is certainly not happening at the moment amongst the musician communities resident in Iran and Pakistan, where recent research has shown a high level of musicianship being maintained. But amongst Afghan communities in the West rapid changes are taking place to Afghan music, where highly westernised forms of dance music are emerging. This is not to discourage such developments, but it is clear that good information about the music of the past, especially its technical aspects, is not widely available to Afghans in the West.

Perhaps most regrettable of all is the fact that both inside and outside Afghanistan women's domestic music, singing with frame drum accompaniment, seems to be threatened with extinction. This is particularly significant because in traditional Afghan society it was exposure to this kind of music that formed the early musical experience for most children, girls and boys (Doubleday and Baily 1995). A crucially important enculturative process has been seriously weakened.

3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

What can be done to support Afghan music culture, both inside and outside the country? There is little point in trying to exert direct political pressure on the Taliban; direct pressure seems to be counter-productive. The censorship of music is just one, small, part of a general package of policies imposed upon the population at large. And while one may deplore these policies, many ordinary people inside Afghanistan who just want to get on with their lives consider the Taliban to be better than the alternative, a continuation of the chaos and war that has now lasted for 22 years. Likewise, there is considerable support for the Taliban amongst Pashtuns outside the country, even though they themselves do not conform to Taliban edicts.

So, it is a matter of taking some practical steps, in the hope that in due course conditions will change and a less authoritarian regime will come into being. In the case of music the following measures can be suggested, some of which are already being implemented.

1 To highlight the critical situation as it exists today, which is the purpose of writing this report for FREEMUSE.

2 To try to give musicians both inside and outside the country economic support. In the case of transnational communities, it is necessary to persuade aid agencies of the importance of music in the lives of refugees
(Baily 2000a).

3 To make sure that what is left from the past is adequately documented, so that something is left for the future. There are already many commercially released audio recordings of Afghan music, but more needs to be done, especially locating archives of field recordings made by western scholars. These recordings need to be fed back in one form or another to the communities from which they originated. Video and printed texts also have to be made more readily available.

4 To support the craftsmen who make traditional Afghan musical instruments such as rubab, tanbur, dutar, ghaichak, zirbaghali and others. Traditional music cannot be played without the appropriate traditional instruments in association with which the music has developed. Instruments which are being destroyed need to be replaced; Afghan musicians living in the West find it very difficult to acquire traditional instruments (Baily 2000b).

5 To support practical musical education programmes in the transnational community. Various attempts have been made hitherto but have received insufficient recognition from UN or NGO agencies. A number of private initiatives have been noted in Pakistan and the USA.

NOTES

1 The terminology is certainly confusing, and arises in part from the fact that distinct ethnic groups may be known to others by a name which is different from that which members of the group use themselves. To try to clarify matters: the Pashtuns are also known as Afghans, and this has given rise to the name of Afghanistan for the country. By extension, members of other ethnic groups living in Afghanistan are also identified as Afghans. But the "true Afghans" are the Pashtuns.

2 Afghan Persian is commonly called *Farsi* in Afghanistan, as in the expression *farsiwan*, "Farsi speaker", but I have chosen to use the official name Dari here. The shared language between Iran and Afghanistan is often a cause for disagreement between people from the two countries, who lay claim and counterclaim to the credit for the great body of poetry and prose in the Persian language.

3 After 1919 the government of Afghanistan was keen to rely as little as possible on British technical assistance. Germany was found to be a ready source for the new technology of the time, especially for the building of factories.

4 Many 78 rpm recordings of Afghan artists were recorded in India in the 1920s. Later, 78 rpm records were manufactured in the USSR. Such records could be played on air.
Audio tape recording did not start until the 1960s; before that all programmes were live. Over the years the radio station built up an important collection of recordings of Afghan music.

5 Rose and nightingale symbolism is explained by a leading expert on the mystical dimension of Persian poetry in the following terms:

Everyone who has read Persian poetry, if only in translation, knows of the nightingale who yearns for the rose - it is, in mystical language, the soul longing for eternal beauty... The nightingale infinitely repeats the praise of the rose without tiring, tells of its longing, sings hymns from the Koran of the rose (i.e., its petals), suffers without complaint the stings of the thorns. [The poet] Iqbal has interpreted the song of the nightingale in the context of his philosophy of unfulfilled union and longing - only longing gives the soul bird the capacity to sing, inspiring it to create lovely melodies. Longing is the highest state the soul can reach, for it results in creativity, whereas union brings about silence and annihilation (Schimmel 1975:307).
These ideas are by no means remote to the average Afghan, and *ghazals* and other poems embodying these images, ambiguous in their mystical-erotic sentiment, are commonly sung by both urban and rural singers.

6 A very powerful amplification system had been installed in Herat's Friday Mosque, in the middle of the old city, which emitted an early morning call to prayer loud enough to rouse people from their sleep half a mile away.

7 "Music drum" presumably refers to the frame drum (*daireh*), predominantly the preserve of girls and women, for playing at home.

8 As with the censorship of music, such restrictions were already in place in Herat during the Rabbani period. The Mayor of Herat instructed that footballers should wear baggy trousers. When they complained that this impeded their movements when running on the field he is said to have replied that he had worn trousers made from 20 metres of material and that had not stopped him fighting against the enemy's tanks.

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CONTENTS OF CD

The CD that supports the report is simply intended to provide examples of some of the genres of music and of religious singing that are mentioned in the text. Some basic information about each item is provided, but the names of the performers are not given (in some cases are not even known). For most items the melodic mode *(rag)* and metric cycle *(tal)* are identified, even though these concepts may be alien to the performers themselves. Details of Afghan music theory can by found in Baily (1988). The first four examples were recorded off air from Radio Afghanistan in Kabul in 1973, using a low-budget radio/cassette unit of the kind available to many Afghans at the time, and therefore represent exactly the kind of music widely listened to the radio audience in Afghanistan. Several items stem from my fieldwork, while the two Taliban examples come from audio cassettes from Pakistan, and represent exactly what the careful car driver puts on when approaching a road check point.

1 Music from Logar, near Kabul.
Vocal with *'armonia, rubab, sarinda* and *dhol.* Sung in Pashto, using poetry of the type known as *landay* or *tappa.* The mode is *Bairami* and the metre *Mogholi.*
This example illustrates the Pashtun style, with many short instrumental sections and use of pronounced rhythmic cadences.
Recorded off air, Radio Afghanistan, 1973.

2 Kabuli *ghazal.*
Vocal with *'armonia, delruba* and *tabla.* Illustrates the art music *ghazal* style very well, with complex rhythmic fluctuations and tempo changes.
Recorded off air, Radio Afghanistan, 1973.

3 Music from Charikar region, near Kabul.
Vocal with *tanbur, tabla* and *zang* (rattle). The mode is *Bairami* and the metre *Dadra.* Dari text, Pashtun style, with typical instrumental sections and pronounced rhythmic cadences.
Recorded off air, Radio Afghanistan, 1973.

4 Popular radio song in praise of President Daud's Republic.
Vocal with *'armonia, sarangi* and *tabla.* The mode is *Bilawal* and the metre *Gedeh.*
Recorded off air, Radio Afghanistan, 1973.

5 Local song.
Performed in the radio style by a woman radio singer with *'armonia, rubab, dutar* and *tabla.* The mode is *Bairami* and the metre *Gedeh. Ramazan concert, 1977.*

6 *Zikr* of Naqshbandi Sufi Order.
One can distinguish the sound of the *zakirin* and the singers, whose mode is *Bairami* and metre G*edeh.*
1977.

7 Unaccompanied *na't* composed by Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, a 13th century Sufi saint.
The mode is *Bairami* and the metre *Mogholi.* Note the wide vocal vibrato and the two-part melody, typical of local music of Herat.
1977.

8 Shi'a commemorations in Muharram.
Antiphonal style, with call and response structure. The percussion comes from the men beating their chests.
1977.

9 Taliban chant.
Two singers, heavy delay and reverberation. The mode is like *Pari*, the metre *Dadra.* The melody has two parts. The text talks about Taliban commitment to Islam, about Taliban readiness for sacrifice for their country, and addresses several Taliban who have died for the cause.
About 1998.

10 Taliban chant.
Slight delay and reverberation. The mode is like *Kesturi.* The first section is sung in free rhythm, the second part in *Gedeh.* The text mentions those who have been wounded in battle, and singles out the northern leader General Dostum and Ahmad Shah Masud as criminals with whom Taliban will never have dealings. The text names martyrs to the cause and states that we are young Afghan Talibs who are rebuilding Islam in our country with dignity.
About 1998.