Ethnomusicological Research: Past, Present, and Future

Little was known in the West about the music of Afghanistan until the 1950s, when a few LPs of an ethnographic kind were published, such as the Lubchtschansky disc Afghanistan et Iran in the Collection du Musée de l’Homme, and the UNESCO collection A Musical Anthology of the Orient, recordings made by Alain Daniélou. Afghanistan was typified as “The Crossroads of Asia”, a term which implied a variegated cultural mix. In the 1960s, several ethnomusicologists worked in Afghanistan, notably Felix Hoebinger from West Germany, José Zoch from Czechoslovakia, and Mark Slobin and Lorraine Sakata from the USA. My wife, Veronica Doubléday, and I were active between 1973 and 1977. Since then, there has been little opportunity for research.

When I started my research on music in Afghanistan in 1973, I held a Social Science Research Council Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship in the Department of Social Anthropology at The Queen’s University of Belfast, in collaboration with anthropologist and ethnomusicologist John Blacking. Our research project focused on recent changes in the Herati datur, a type of long-necked lute. Between 1950 and 1965 this was transformed from a small two-stringed instrument of rural ama- noun Перочинная книга музыки музыковиа, New York, “Afghanistan” chapter, and in the Collection du Musée de l’Homme, and the UNESCO collection. The Freemuse report took for grant-ed that the Taliban would remain in control of most, if not all, of Afghanistan for the foreseeable future, and made various recommendations intended to consolidate Afghan music in the transnational community. The completely unforeseen departure of the Taliban radically changed the situation. One of the first signs of the end of Tal- ban control in the country was the end of the sound of music in the streets and over local airwaves. In the past, music was closely connected with festive occasions and, as such, was appropriate to mark the end of Taliban oppression. Bring-ing out the previously carefully hidden music cassettes, sound systems, and musical instruments was an act of defi- nity (Baily 2000).

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Notes
1. An account of these findings is given in Baily (1984a).
2. The history of recent music cen-sorship is explained in my report published by Freemuse (Baily 2001).