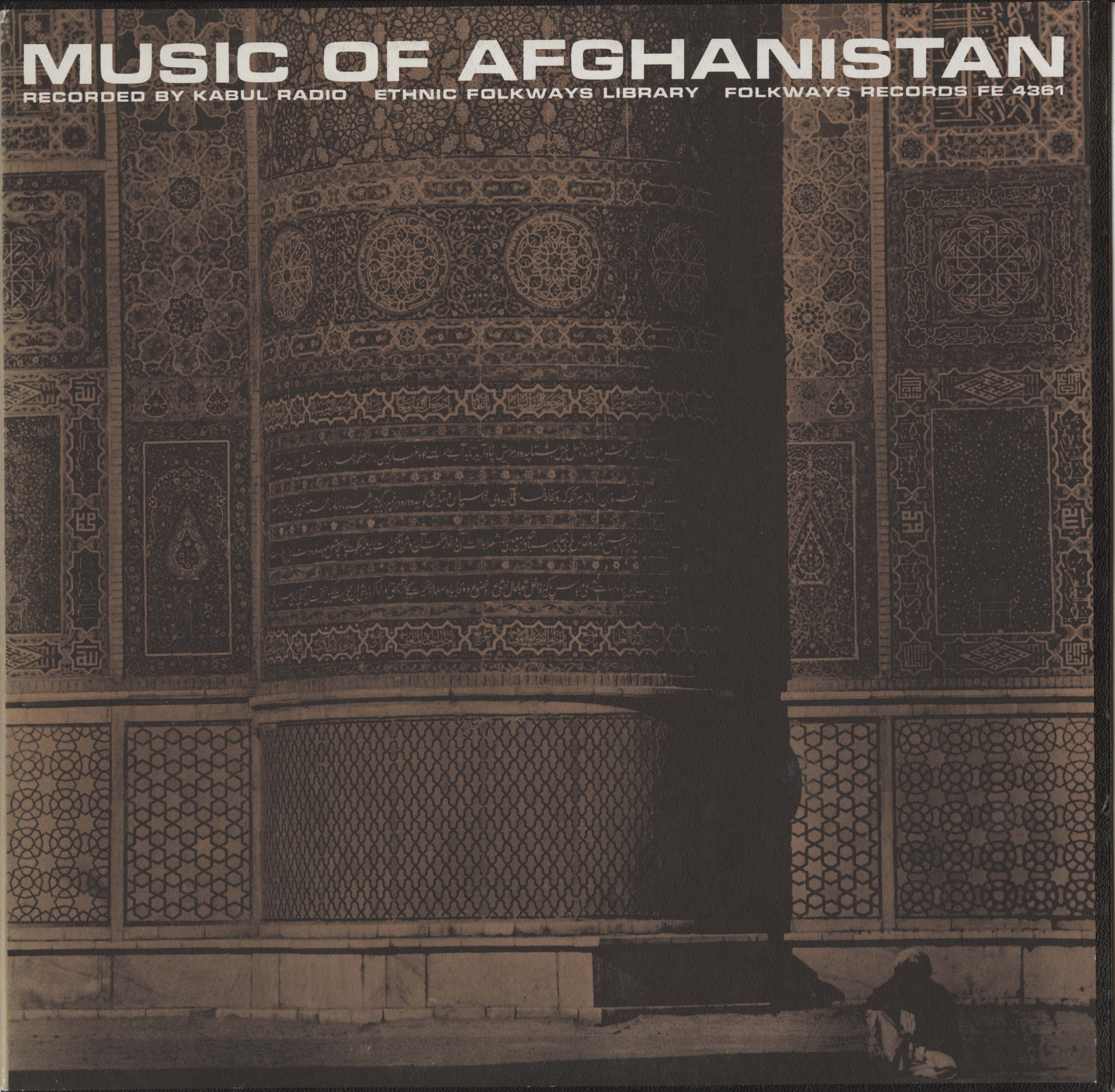


MUSIC OF AFGHANISTAN

RECORDED BY KABUL RADIO

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS LIBRARY

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4361



RUBAB SOLO
LOVERS' MEETING
SPRING IS HERE
ZERBAPHALI SOLO
LOVER'S DESIRE
MELODY OF THE TULIPS
SONG OF THE DESERT
TALL GIRLS
RUBAB AND DHOOL DUET
THE FLOWER IS BLOOMING
RED CUP OF WINE

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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AFGHANISTAN

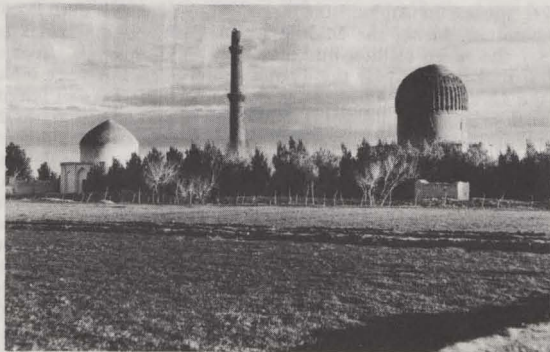
Recorded by Radio Kabul

SIDE 1

1. RUBAB SOLO
Ustad Moh'med Omar
۱ - رباب
استاد محمد عمر
2. LOVERS' MEETING
Awal Mir and Chorus
۲ - د آشنا دیدار
اول میر او ملگری
3. SPRING IS HERE
Mrs. Parwin
۳ - چهار آمد
میر من پروین
4. ZERBAPHALI SOLO
Malang
۴ - زیر بغلی
ملنگ
5. LOVER'S DESIRE
Mr. Sarahang
۵ - آرزوی عاشق
استاد سرآهنگ

SIDE 2

1. MELODY OF THE TULIPS
Afghan National Orchestra
۶ - دگل سرخ نغمه
دکابل رادیو ملی آرکسترا
2. SONG OF THE DESERT
Mr. Kheyal
۷ - ریگ بیابان
خیال
3. TALL GIRLS
Rubab and Dhol Duet
۸ - دول اورباب
گل علم او استاد محمد عمر
4. THE FLOWER IS BLOOMING
Mrs. Parwin and Chorus
۹ - گل غوتی
میرمن پروین او ملگری
5. RED CUP OF WINE
Yaqub Kasimi
۱۰ - جام ارغوانی
یعقوب قاسمی



THE LAND OF THE AFGHANS

Afghanistan, or "The Land of the Afghans", forms the north-eastern portion of the Great Iranian Plateau. The present name "Afghanistan" is not the original name of this ancient country. Before the establishment of the last Afghan Empire of Kandahar, the country was known as "Khorasan" which, literally translated, means "the land from which the sun rises". This name was given to the country at the beginning of the Islamic period by the Persians and Arabs living in the West.

Owing to her geographical position on both sides of the Hindu-Kush and between the Rivers Oxus and Indus, Afghanistan has from the earliest time frequently been the scene of great historical events. Archaeological research has shed some light on the country's early history and many relics of the past, belonging to several different periods, have been identified. The works of Professor Hackin, Monsieur Griesman and Sir Oriel Stein are particularly notable in this field.

A close study of the Afghan way of life, the Afghan folk-lore, folk-songs and folk-dances reveals how very deeply these ancient times have left their impression on present usages and customs. Mythological and oral literature provides positive evidence of what has happened in this most romantic and interesting country. The study of the historic literature on Afghanistan represents one of the most important literary collections of the Oriental World as a whole and is of supreme importance to all students concerned with basic historical research on a country which has been the scene of the greatest events in the history of the world. The ancient tales of kings and heroes are not only of historical interest but of great literary value; their style and the way in which they are told are a revealing example of the evolution of human imagination and thought.

Geographically speaking, Afghanistan is situated in the heart of Asia and, as a comparatively small country (area 270,000 square miles, 763,000 kilometres), is surrounded by Russia, China, Persia and the sub-continent of India. Her neighbours on the northern borders are the people of Soviet Russia (Uzbeghs and Tadjiks); in the East, a narrow strip of land, Wakhan, brings the Afghans into contact with the Chinese; on the Indian side they find on their borders the Pakhtuns or Pathans, the people of the newly-formed state of Pakhtunistan, who live in the territory between Afghanistan and Pakistan; on the West are the Persians.

Islam, the religion of Mahommed, is the official religion of the country and the faith of the overwhelming majority of the population (99.7%). Unlike other Asian countries, the unity of religion is considered to be of great significance as constituting a safeguard of the unity of the different communities of the Afghan people. The few thousand Hindus, Sikhs and Jews scattered over the country are mostly merchants and business men living in the towns. According to the constitutional law of the country they are regarded as Afghan citizens enjoying equal rights and perfect freedom of faith.

The Afghans belong to the Sunni (Hanafi) sect of Islam. They are firm believers in their faith and take great pride in spreading it throughout the sub-continent of India as far as the Bay of Bengal and the Daccan. The founder of the Hanafi sect, Imam Azam Abu-Hanifa, was born in Kabul. Although Afghanistan is the original home of Zoroastrianism (the religion of Zarathustra of Balch), and was at one time the greatest centre of Buddhism, no trace of either of these ancient religions can now be found anywhere in the country. After centuries of wars the religion of Islam has ultimately prevailed.

The languages spoken in Afghanistan are Pakhto (Pashto) and Persian, both of which developed in Afghanistan during the Middle Ages. Pashto is the language of the Pakhtuns; it is also spoken by the seven million inhabitants of Pakhtunistan, between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Persian is spoken mostly by the Tadjik community, but since it has been for centuries the language of the Court, most Afghans are educated in the Persian language. The Uzbeks in Afghanistan speak a special dialect of Turkish origin influenced by and intermingled with both Pashto and Persian expressions and terms. It exists only as an unwritten language.

Pashto belongs to the Indo-European group of languages. It is derived from the ancient Aryan language, and as it was spoken in a secluded mountainous region its purity has been so well preserved that Pashto can be regarded as a link with the ancient Indo-Aryan languages, an opinion which is confirmed by Dr. Trumpp's and Dr. Darmesteter's research into the grammar of the Pashto language and its comparison with Sanskrit and Zend. Persian belongs also to the group of Indo-European languages and is closely related to Pashto.

The language is called Pashto after the word "Pashtun" the modern form of Pakta or Pakhta, which is related to the name of Bactria, or Bakhtar, Bukhdi or Bakhti (the modern Balch) the place of origin of the language of the 'Avesta'. Herodotus mentions the Pakhtuns as Paktyes, and calls them a branch of the Aryans inhabiting the country of Paktia.



The nature of the country and the people inhabiting it for many thousands of years have made Afghanistan a land of absorbing folklore. From the times of oral literature through the long periods of history, people have preserved the memory of great events, coloured and embellished by the imagination, and have thus produced a wealth of folklore and songs of great charm. Afghan mythology is based on the ancient Aryan mythology and is therefore among the oldest and most interesting of its kind. Old legends of the country have not been neglected, as in so many other Oriental countries, but have furnished the material for great poets and writers. Even after the adoption of the Islamic religion the love of the people for their national heroes and traditions ensured the survival of the legends and were finally inscribed as chronicles of the glorious past.

Likewise, the Afghans have preserved their music through the ages. A person from the West would be impressed by the originality and strangeness of the Afghan music—the instruments and the way they are handled, the strange multiplicity of the rhythms, and the simplicity of the singing. According to J. Delor "it is the music of two worlds, linking the East with the West. Generally, it is gay, brilliant and distinctive and has nothing of Arab monotony or Persian languor; to the Westerner, it is strange and yet at the same time hauntingly familiar. Mountain songs and music are quite different from those of the cities and cafes. They are simple, without flourishes, and have a healthy, vigorous and noble quality about them. Many of them, usually sung unaccompanied, resemble the old songs of Europe—sometimes one is reminded of a Spanish air or an old French carol, and occasionally even a Scandinavian theme can be recognised among them."

There is a great variety of string instruments, the most typical being the Saranda which has a resonant, semi-circular body, often made of dry gourd, a short neck and is played with a thick bow. The most appealing is the long-necked Afghan Robab with its six catgut strings which are plucked with a plectrum. An orchestra always has percussion instruments, the chief of which is the Tabla from which a good musician can extract some of the most extraordinary sounds and rhythms. In fact, the Tabla sets the rhythm which, in Oriental music, is the interpretation of sentiment and mood.

No description of Afghan life would be complete without an account of the public dances. These take place on national or religious feast days or in celebration of some occasion. A level piece of ground is selected and a post fixed in the centre around which the young men revolve

in ever widening circles, always keeping the centre on their left to give greater play to their arms. The older and less nimble form the inner circles, with the young men dancing round the outside with amazing agility, often with a gun or sword in each hand which they wave in circles alternately round their heads. Beyond them is another circle of horsemen who display their prowess in the saddle and their skill with sword or gun at the same time. On the side of the circle stand the village minstrels playing a tune on drums and pipes. This tune begins with a slow beat so that one sees all the circles revolving with a measured tread before the music grows faster and faster, until it appears to the onlooker as one surging mass of waving swords and rifles. As often as not the rifles are loaded too, and their discharge from time to time renders yet wilder the gyrations of the horsemen on the outer circle. Suddenly the music stops, everybody halting to regain breath, only to start again after a few minutes and continue until all are tired out.

Attan is the Afghan national dance which is accompanied by a band of musicians playing native instruments while songs are sung in chorus by the dancers themselves. The number of dancers is usually between fifty and a hundred, and they perform the Attan in a circle, taking each other by the hand or dancing round in circles of their own with free movements of their hands and bodies. The dance starts with slow steps and gets gradually faster and faster as the sound of the music rises. However, the dance sometimes continues for two or three hours at a stretch with no break except to lower the tempo or change the tunes and songs which slightly alters the dance. These changes are directed by the leader of the dancers and the conductor of the band. Sometimes the dance is performed as part of a marriage ceremony on the way from the bridegroom's house to the bride's, which may be the distance from one village to the next. In such cases the leader goes first followed by musicians with the dancers bringing up the rear in lines of ten to twelve.

