

# Introduction: Aims and Scope of the Inquiry

The point of departure for the present inquiry into the role of music in the culture of northern Afghanistan is a statement of Fredrik Barth's:

Ethnic categories provide an organizational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems. They may be of great relevance to behaviour, but they need not be; they may pervade all social life, or they may be relevant only in limited sectors of activity. There is thus an obvious scope for ethnographic and comparative descriptions of different forms of ethnic organization. (Barth 1969:14)

The Afghan North, as delineated in the ethnographic outline below, is a multiethnic society many centuries old. Groups representing various branches of Iranian and Turco-Mongol languages and cultures coexist in an area that has also been a major crossroads of Asia for several thousand years. In Afghan Turkestan the steppe allows for broad interrelation of ethnic groups within roughly the same ecological niche, while the Pamirs to the east preserve vest-pocket populations speaking highly archaic languages and living in considerable isolation even today.

The aim of the present study is to focus on a single cultural trait — music — as it illuminates the patterns of interethnic contact in the North. A dictum of Barth's, that ". . . ethnic boundaries are maintained in each case by a limited set of cultural features" (1969:38), points to the possibility that music may be one of those features of social interrelationship that reflect underlying patterns of ethnic boundary maintenance. Izikowitz (1969:141) has defined three categories of social and cultural differences that go into the making of ethnic boundaries: "(1) differences in technique of expression, whether it be in language, ritual action, gestures, etiquette or customs . . . (2) value systems . . . intimately connected with techniques of expression; (3)

self-identification.” Music, as a technique of cultural expression, easily fits Izikowitz’s first two categories, and by implication is included in the third one as well, since groups may use music as one means of self-identification.

In following the approach outlined above, this study presents two kinds of data: (1) descriptive information about the music of the North, including a comprehensive listing of musical instruments and an analytical presentation of genres and styles, and (2) an examination both of the musical traits (attitudes, repertoires, instruments) that are shared by two or more ethnic groups, and of those discrete elements that occur in the music of only one ethnic group and thus mark off music subcultures. The major peoples of the area share in a joint pattern of musical behavior to a greater or lesser extent, yet each displays characteristic individual features of musical life. In presenting the resulting mosaic of practices in northern Afghanistan I shall draw on data from two crucial adjacent areas: (1) Soviet Central Asia to the north, where nearly all the same ethnic groups (and in some cases the same families) live, and (2) the rest of Afghanistan to the south and west, as well as neighboring Iranian Xorasan, where there is a good deal of cultural overlap.

Areas such as the Afghan North are not rare in the Near East; many regions are occupied by a multiplicity of ethnic groups operating with a high degree of multilingualism and common religious (if not sectarian) affiliation within a relatively undifferentiated ecological niche. To cite Barth once again:

. . . nomad, peasant and city dweller can belong to the same ethnic group in the Middle East; where ethnic boundaries persist they depend on more subtle and specific mechanisms mainly connected with the unfeasibility of certain status and role combinations. (1969:26)

The anthropologists Richard and Nancy Tapper have succinctly summarized the way in which such “subtle mechanisms” work in northern Afghanistan: “criteria actually used for maintaining ethnic boundaries vary with the boundary and the group” (1973:p.c.\*). It is my hope that the survey of musical attitudes, repertoires, and instruments presented in the following chapters may illuminate some of those criteria, as observed in the period 1967–1972.

\*P.c.: personal communication.

## THE GEOGRAPHIC AND ETHNIC SETTING

The great mountain ranges of Afghanistan — Paropamisus, Koh-i Bābā, Hindu Kush — form one giant system defining the backbone of the country (front endsheet). By its presence or absence, this mountain system defines the basic areas of the country. To the north, south, and west lie large tracts of desert plateau nearly indistinguishable from similar lands in adjacent Iran, Soviet Central Asia, and Pakistan. To the east, the mountain barrier links up with a yet greater system, the knot of the Pamirs, which eventually meets the wide belt of the Himalayas far beyond the borders of Afghanistan. The Afghan mountains themselves, with innumerable folds and valleys, enclose central Afghanistan (the Hazarajāt, Ğorāt, and Badġisāt) and, in the north-east, Badaxšān.

The focus of the present study is northern Afghanistan, which comprises three sectors: Turkestan (the provinces of Fariāb, Jozjān, Balx, and Samangān); Kataġan (Baġlān, Kunduz, and Taxor provinces); and Badaxšān (a single province). To make the succeeding presentation of the role of music in northern Afghan culture more meaningful, it is necessary to define the integral ethnic and geographic components of these areas. Though we can read numerous discussions of the ethnic groups of Afghanistan, a comprehensive ethnography of the peoples in the North had not been undertaken as of 1973; moreover, the data that are available have often been presented with bias to make a certain case, and even estimates of absolute numbers vary wildly (200,000 to 2,000,000 for the Turkmens, for instance). These problems acknowledged, I shall proceed with the necessary attempt to survey the available ethnographic information, first describing the basic ethnic groups and then indicating how they fit into the three zones mentioned above.

The ethnographic map given here (Map II) is based on the Soviet map (as published in Bruk 1955: facing 72), which is still the most thorough and reliable source available. It is clear that members of two great Eurasian linguistic families, Turks and Iranians, form the chief components of the population. The former group includes Uzbeks, Turkmens, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, and perhaps some Karakalpaks, while the latter consists of various Iranian speakers labeled Tajiks and Paštuns. We shall begin our survey with the oldest resident inhabitants, the Tajiks, and continue with the other peoples in order of their population strength, from major to minor groups.

# UNION OF SOVIET

UZBEKISTAN

*Amu-Darya (Oxus)*

TURKMENISTAN

Andxoi

Aqča

Balx

Taşqurğan

**FARIAB PROVINCE**

Šiberğan  
**JOZJAN PROVINCE**

Mazar-i Šarif  
**BALX PROVINCE**

Samangan  
**SAMANGAN PROVINCE**

Saripul

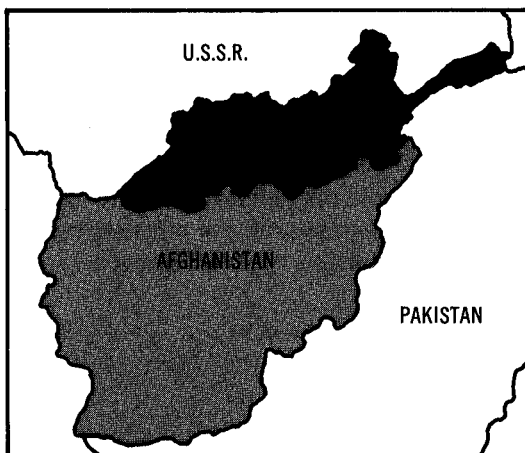
Sangčerak

Širin Tagow

Maimana

Qaisar

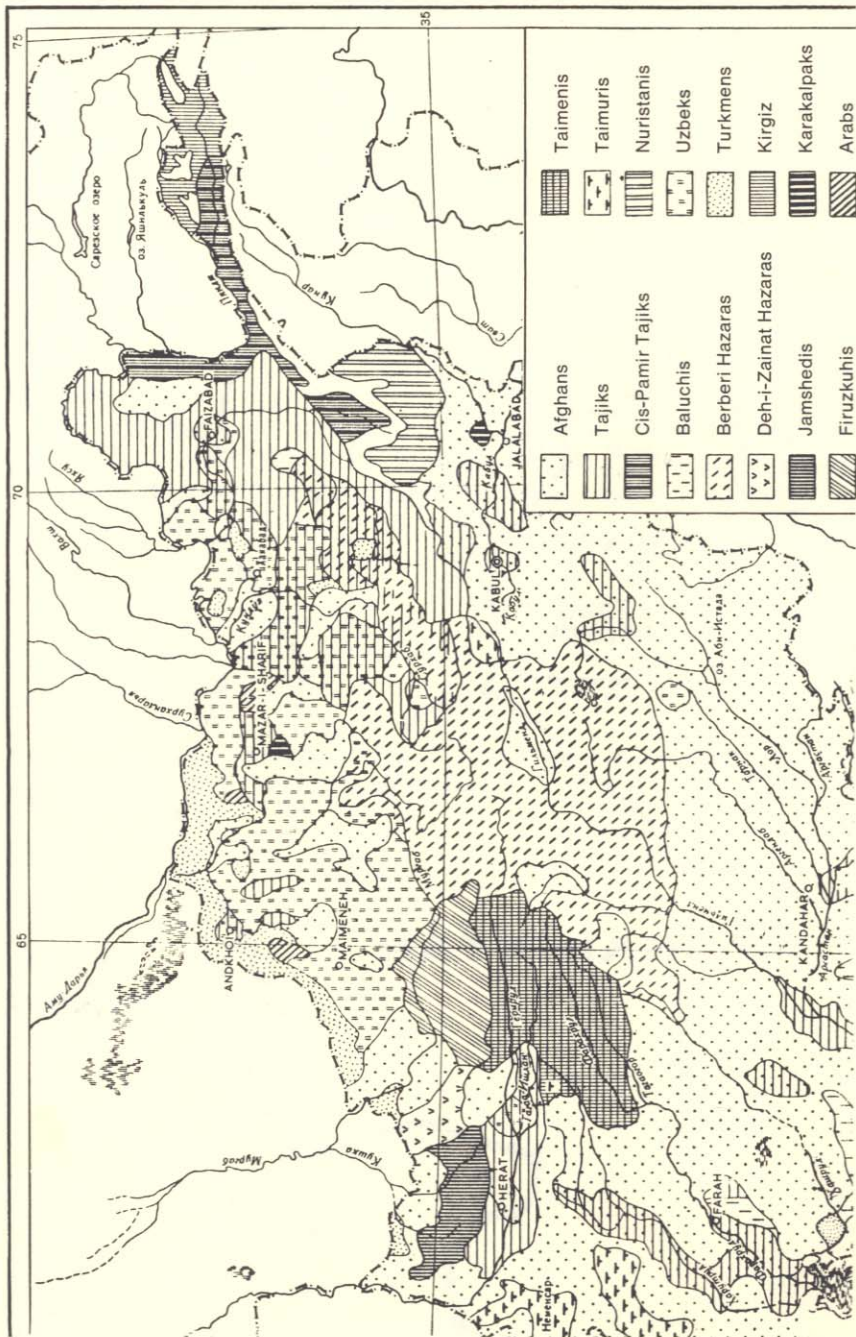
*Turkestan*



# SOCIALIST REPUBLICS



Map 1. Provinces of Northern Afghanistan



Map. II. Ethnographic Map of Afghanistan

## THE TAJIKS

Like many other factors in the great ethnic mix of Afghanistan, the term Tājik itself is ambiguous and somewhat contradictory in origin and application. Browne, in his *Literary History of Persa* (1951:468), gives the standard etymology of the word concisely: "*Tajik*, a term originally applied to the Arabs (Tazik, Tazi) who garrisoned the towns of Khurasan and Transoxania, was later and is still applied to the Persian settled population as opposed to the nomads of Turkish stock." Perhaps typical of this vague usage is the fact that the famed Afghan hound is known in Persian as *tazi* to this day.

Bellew and Elphinstone, writing at different times in the nineteenth century, gave excellent summaries of the use of the term Tajik and of the habits of the Afghan Tajiks. Most of what they said holds true even today. Here is Bellew, writing in 1880 (110):

Tajik [must] be held to be merely the ancient name for the Persian cultivator or peasant. The word, in fact, being a Persian one, is restricted to the territories which formerly owned the Persian sovereignty. Hence its absence from India, and its presence in Turkistan. The Tajiks extend all over the plain country of Afghanistan, from Herat to the Khybar and from Kandahar to the Oxus, and even into Kashgar. The name is applied nowadays in a very loose way, and is made to include all the Persian-speaking people of the country who are not either Hazarah, Afghan or Sayyid. The term is also applied to the representatives of the ancient Persian inhabitants of Badakhshan and its inaccessible mountain glens.

Elphinstone, writing more than forty years earlier, came to much the same conclusion (1839:403-408):

. . . [The Tajiks] are mixed with the Uzbeks through the greater part of their dominions. In Persia, the plains of Afghanistan and the Uzbek country, they appear to have been settled before the arrival of the nations which are now predominant in those countries.

The name of Taujik is rather loosely used. It is sometimes applied to all persons mixed with the Toorks or Afghauns who are not sprung from those stocks . . . but it is with more propriety confined to those inhabitants of countries where Toorkee and Pushtoo are spoken, whose vernacular language is Persian. The names of Taujik and Parseawaun are indeed used indiscriminately both in Afghaunistan and Toorkistaun.

The Taujiks are everywhere remarkable for their use of fixed habitations, and their disposition to agriculture and other settled employments.

The Taujiks are most numerous about towns. They compose the principal part of the population round Caubul, Candahar, Ghuznee, Heraut and Bulkh, while in wild parts of the country . . . there is scarcely a Taujik to be found.

It is remarkable how closely these old descriptions of the place of Tajiks in Afghanistan fit the present-day picture. The only major change since Elphinstone's time is the apparent decrease of Tajiks in Kandahar and Ghazni, where they are hardly as numerous today as they seem to have been in 1839. Both Bellew and Elphinstone showed considerable sensitivity in defining the practical meaning of the term Tajik as it applies throughout Afghanistan today and in much of Soviet Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the recent past.

However, when moving beyond these general descriptions to the more precise questions of identifying Tajiks in a given setting, one realizes the full complexity of the "Tajik problem." Many native speakers of Persian are not Tajiks, nor are all Tajiks alike in such basic matters as adherence to the Sunni or Shi'a branches of Islam or use of the same dialect of Persian. Moving around Afghanistan, one encounters a surprising variety of peoples all calling themselves Tajiks. In the Hazarajat, a large body of Shi'a Tajiks lives alongside the allegedly Mongolian Hazaras, their coreligionists. In the Panjshir, north of Kabul, the so-called Kohistāni Tajiks seem to have sprung from somewhat different stock. The Tajiks of Turkestan are greatly mixed with Uzbeks and have many Turkic words in their speech, and are Sunni. Those of Badaxshan are largely Shi'a, many of them belonging to the Ismaili sect, and are much less mixed with surrounding populations than are the previously mentioned groups of Tajiks.

Farther to the east, the so-called Pamir Tajiks inhabit the "inaccessible mountain glens" referred to by Bellew; they speak very archaic Iranian languages (Yağnobi, Sangličī, Suḡni, etc.) unintelligible to the other Tajiks of Afghanistan. The town Tajiks of Kabul have a different background; many of them are called Qizilbāš and are supposed to have descended from Turkic colonists settled by the Persian conqueror Nadir Shah in the early eighteenth century. The Tajiks of Herat form part of the population of old Xorasan, a part of the Persian Empire from the days of Cyrus the Great. Finally, across the border in the USSR live a large body of Tajiks settled in their own republic, the Tajik SSR; they speak a type of eastern Persian they call Tajik, while their Afghan neighbors speak Fārsi, now called Dari by the Afghan government.

It is clear that all of these varied groups of Tajiks do not spring from a single source in time or place, and that they represent various strata of settlement within the Iranian world. For the most part, Elphinstone's view that the Tajiks were the first to settle in areas that were later overrun by other Iranian and Turco-Mongol peoples seems sound enough, and it is supported by the presence of small pockets of



Tajiks, often speaking archaic dialects, in mountain refuge areas such as the Pamirs. Considerable field work undertaken by Soviet scholars in areas of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan reinforces the view of Tajiks as the old Iranian population of the entire area under discussion in this book, and the present-day differences in beliefs and practices among their various groups must be ascribed to the workings of two or three thousand years of continual flux and turmoil in an area that it often referred to as a major crossroads of Asia.

Turning to the Tajiks of Afghan Turkestan, it is very difficult to estimate their proportion in the total population of the area, but an educated guess of perhaps 25–30 percent might not be far from wrong; there are no reliable official figures bearing on this point. For the Saripul region of Turkestan, not an area of Tajik concentration, the Tappers (1973:p.c.) set the Tajik component at 20 percent. Thus the Tajiks form a minority in Turkestan, as they do in many other regions of the country, but they are a sizable and influential minority in an area where there is no majority group.

Sufficient reason for the cultural importance of the Tajiks could be found in the early descriptions of their life quoted above — they formed the backbone of the old peasant population of much of Afghanistan, including Turkestan, and as such they served as models of settled life for the pastoral nomads, principally Uzbeks and Turkmens, who arrived on the scene in recent centuries. However, trade was also traditionally in the hands of the Tajiks, and the position of their language, Persian, as the lingua franca of Turkestan's commerce gave added impetus to Tajik cultural predominance. Even in the city of Buxara (now in Uzbekistan), which was for centuries the capital of a great Uzbek kingdom, the majority of the population, regardless of ethnic affiliation, spoke Persian, and today, according to Soviet researchers, most Buxaran children still choose to study Tajik (Persian) rather than Uzbek in the public schools (Suxareva 1966:124).

Tajik primacy manifests itself in many ways. Pierre Centlivres notes that in the town of Tašqurġan in Afghan Turkestan, many Uzbeks call themselves Tajiks and prefer to intermarry into Tajik families (1968:p.c.). It is also significant that a great many Uzbeks of northern Afghanistan refer to all of Soviet Central Asia simply as "Tajikistan."

Thus to a great extent Tajiks and Uzbeks have formed a kind of joint culture under Tajik influence in Afghan Turkestan (as well as in Transoxania). Influence does not run only one way, of course: Tajiks have picked up a good many Turkic words and customs as well. We shall discuss Uzbek-Tajik symbiosis at greater length below.

Schurmann (1961:73ff.) divides the Tajiks into four basic types:

Herati, Afghan Turkestani, seminomadic (north of Bamian), and mountain Tajiks (including Badaxšan and Pamirs); this classification is one with which I tend to agree. The main problem Schurmann runs into is one at which every investigator balks: defining Tajiks between Badaxšan and the region north of Bamian. Schurmann tends to call all of these mountain Tajiks:

The region of Mountain Tadjik settlement extends from the Western Paropamisus to the Soviet-Chinese Pamirs. The Tadjik settlement of Sar-i Muskan (. . . in the Ghorat) probably forms the southwesternmost extension of Mountain Tadjik settlement . . . there are indications that prior to the incursions of Mongoloid nomadic groups, the principal population of both the Badghisat and the Hazarajat was Mountain Tadjik (or some form of Iranian population). (1961:77)

In the final parenthetical remark Schurmann begs the question; clearly "some form of Iranian population" is involved, but we remain in the dark as to the history of and links between various types of so-called Tajiks.

### THE UZBEKS

As can be seen in Map II, the Uzbek population tends to cluster near the major northern urban centers. To the north, Uzbeks trail off beyond the edges of the steppe zone; to the east, a certain number can be found in Badaxšan alongside mountain Tajiks (Kushkeki 1926); to the south, they extend into the foothill zone stretching from below Maimana to Samangan, and in Saripul the Tappers assess the Uzbek component at 40 percent of the population (1974:p.c.); in the west, Uzbeks dwindle out between Qaisar and Bala Murğab in the Paropamisus zone.

Estimates of the number of Uzbeks in Afghanistan vary widely. Perhaps the figure of one million given in the Soviet survey of Afghanistan is most acceptable (Aslanov 1969:72); at any rate, it is clear that a fairly large population is involved for a country so sparsely settled as Afghanistan.

The Uzbeks, like the Tajiks, have no common place of origin or time of appearance on the Turkestani scene. Soviet scholars, particularly B. Kh. Karmysheva (1964), have inquired deeply into the ethnic composition of the southern areas of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and their findings probably hold good for northern Afghanistan. According to Karmysheva (1964:98), there are basically two major groups of Uzbeks in the area: (1) the vast majority (about 75 percent), consisting of Uzbeks whose origin can be traced to the Dašt-i Kipčak (in the present Kazakh steppe) and who arrived in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, mostly during the large-scale Uzbek invasion led by Šeibani Xan in the early sixteenth century; and (2) a smaller group of Uzbeks called Türk (10 percent), whose arrival considerably predates that of the Dašt-i Kipčak Uzbeks and who were already cultivators when the latter appeared on the scene. To these two groups can be added other minor components, principally the rather mysterious group called the Čagatai Uzbeks (2.6 percent), corresponding roughly to the Čagatai Tajiks (the origin of both is obscure, and a full discussion of the term Čagatai, though fascinating, lies beyond the scope of the present study). Karmysheva is able to supply a clear picture of the settlement pattern of these groups, placing the Türk in hills above the Čagatai and Dašt-i Kipčak Uzbeks, but below the mountain Tajiks (1964:98). She also points out the presence of tiny splinter groups of Uzbeks whose background is shrouded in historical confusion.

This interesting information notwithstanding, we are still in the dark as to the exact relationship existing between the Uzbeks (and for that matter, the Tajiks) of Afghanistan and their relatives in Transoxania. The general breakdown given by Karmysheva may well be valid in both areas, but recent history has provided a considerable barrier to the continued sharing of culture by these groups, in the form of a political frontier. G. F. Debets, a Soviet anthropologist, recently spent considerable time surveying the peoples of Afghanistan, and he offers this caveat: "Notwithstanding the common origin of the Uzbeks living to the north and south of the Amu-Darya, it is completely obvious that the political boundary introduced along this river as early as the eighteenth century has played a definite ethnographic role" (1967:88). Thus the common cultural heritage of the Uzbeks has been broken, and we shall see in later chapters how this is reflected in differences between the music culture of northern Afghanistan and that of Soviet Central Asia. Debets also notes that the Afghan Uzbeks are quite vague about their tribal identity, though some of them identify themselves as Čagatai Uzbeks (1967:88). This indicates that they have been cut off from the bulk of Uzbeks in southern Uzbekistan, who have strong tribal orientations. It seems likely, however, that the underlying distinctions made by Karmysheva probably held true for Afghan Turkestan in the past. Thus, for example, Vambery (1970:268) observed ". . . 200 tents of the Uzbeks, from the tribes of Kungrat and Nayman" near the Afghan border at Kerki in 1863, indicating that tent residence, mobility, and easy identification of constituent tribes were standard parts of Uzbek life a century ago.

Most of the Uzbeks of Afghan Turkestan are settled and live in towns or villages, but up until quite recently — the late nineteenth

century — there was a considerable body of seminomadic Uzbeks in Turkestan. It was largely because of the pressure of incoming Paštun nomads (see below), who preempted much of the favorable grazing land, that the Uzbeks turned to agriculture and town life.

Karmysheva does not mention, for obvious reasons, one important group of Afghan Uzbeks: the émigrés of the early twentieth century who crossed the border during the Basmači rebellion against Soviet power in the 1920s and 1930s. Considerable numbers of these *mohajerin* (“refugees”), as they are called, live in Katağan, but some of them can be found in Turkestani towns such as Andxoi and Mazar-i Šarif. They tend to have urban rather than peasant or seminomadic origins, and they are still sharply defined within the Afghan Uzbek community.

### THE TURKMENS

The Turkmens are the only people of the North who also live in the two adjoining countries, the USSR and Iran. Estimates of the number of Turkmens in Afghanistan vary as widely as those for Uzbeks. Schurmann (1961:86) has collected the Russian guesses as follows: Aristov at 50,000; Reisner at 200,000; Reiser at 4 percent of the population of Afghanistan; and Bochkarev at 380,000, or 3 percent. Schurmann himself gives “a minimum Turkmen population in Afghanistan of 200,000 or more.” The most recent Soviet figure, 400,000 (Aslanov 1969:75), is probably as accurate as any.

The Turkmens are concentrated in a thin strip of territory extending no more than about fifty kilometers south of the Soviet border, except in the Herat area in the extreme west. This strip runs nearly the entire length of northern Afghanistan, from Herat to eastern Katağan. Outside of this zone of settlement, some Turkmens can be found in Kabul, where they are prominent in the carpet industry. There seem to be few, if any, Turkmens in Badaxšan.

The Turkmens of Turkestan and Katağan are largely of the Ersari and Alieli tribes. There are some Salor and Teke Turkmens in the Herat area, along with scattered representatives of other tribes. Though the vast majority of Afghan Turkmens are recent immigrants, who came across the Soviet border in the years roughly from 1915 to 1940, chronicles of the eighteenth and even seventeenth centuries indicate the presence of large groups of Turkmens in the Andxoi-Aqča sector of Afghan Turkestan, according to the Soviet scholar Yu. E. Bregel, who has compiled a valuable ethnic map of southern Turkmenistan for both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (1959:14). His chart shows first Imreli and then both Afšar and Jalair Turkmens in the area mentioned. Nineteenth-century travelers often remarked on

the presence of Turkmens in the general area of Balx, which for them included land as far west as Andxoi. Vambéry, for example, spoke of the Ersari as occupying the territory between Čarjau, now in the Turkmen SSR, and Balx, while he located the Alieli between Andxoi and Merv (1970:274). His judgment of the Turkmens is rather interesting, contrasting as it does with the common nineteenth-century view of the Turkmens as unscrupulous marauders and slave traders: "Turkmens, though predatory and anarchic in structure, have fewer thieves, murderers and breaches of justice and morals than all the other Islamic peoples" (1873:274).

Afghan Turkmens concede that there were relatively few of their people in Afghanistan before the first quarter of the twentieth century. Observation will bear out the impression that the most prominent and prosperous Turkmens are those who came during that time. The powerful leading family of the village of Qizilayāq, for example, which exercises great influence on Afghan Turkmens through religious authority, crossed the border in 1916, because of the growing troubles in their homeland.

Turkmens live in *qišlāqs* (villages) surrounding a local market center that serves as the major point of contact with the outside world. Apparently, Turkmens also resided outside city walls a century ago; Ferrier (1860), in his survey of northern towns, mentioned only a majority Uzbek and minority Tajik population in Maimana, Andxoi, Šiberğan, and Aqča. Most Turkmen houses are built with the *gumbat*, or domed roof, construction that is found in various areas of the Near East and is particularly popular in Northern Afghanistan. There do not seem to be any purely nomadic Turkmens in Afghanistan and few, if any, seminomads.

The Turkmens do not make good ethnic mixers. They tend to remain aloof from their neighbors, even from fellow Turks like the Uzbeks, though Schurmann notes "much more intermingling between Turkmens and Uzbeks" at the Turkestani end of Turkmen habitation than between Turkmens and Aimaqs towards the Badġisat end (1961: 95). One can indeed witness a certain amount of adaptation by Turkmens to Uzbek life-styles in the North, and this in turn is related to the Uzbeks' acculturation to Tajik norms mentioned earlier. This role of Uzbeks as cultural middlemen for other Turks has been documented for various areas of Central Asia, and as long ago as 1865 Vambéry observed that in the Ferghana Valley area Kirghiz, Kipchak, and Kalmucks assimilated to Uzbeks "due to a certain prestige of breeding and *bon ton* of the Uzbeks, longer established in Turkestan" (1970:432).

For the most part, the Turkmens are economically well established in Afghanistan, thanks to the enormous importance to the Afghan economy of the carpets (of the "Afghan" and "Boxara" varieties) woven by Turkmen women and of the karakul sheep, which the Turkmens brought to Afghanistan by the millions. Rugs and skins form the two largest export items in Afghanistan. Much of the prosperity resulting from this trade falls into the hands of a small upper class of Turkmens, but Turkmens in general are fairly well off by Afghan standards. This judgment, of course, depends greatly on two principal factors: favorable sale abroad for Turkmen skins and carpets and favorable weather for livestock breeding. The disastrous drought and subsequent severe winter and flooding of 1970-72 had calamitous effects on Turkmen livestock holdings. Estimates of losses for karakul sheep herds tended to run at about 75 to 80 percent, with some villagers facing starvation.

Settled now in villages and adjusting somewhat to the Uzbek-Tajik model of village life, the Turkmens today are beginning to forget their old tribal ways and are participating in Afghan social and political life. G. F. Debets, who noted the differences between Afghan and Uzbekistani Uzbeks mentioned above, has this comment on the Turkmens: "The Afghan Turkmens find themselves in approximately the same position vis-à-vis the Turkmens of Turkmenia as the Afghan Uzbeks to the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan" (1967:88).

Some of the difference Debets notes, however, may well be ascribed to tribal variations among the Turkmens. The Ersari, for instance, who form the bulk of northern Afghan Turkmens, have long been distinct from other Turkmen tribes, as noted by Vambery:

The Ersari Turkomans, who only migrated hither from Manghishlak 200 years ago, have retained very little of the national characteristics of the Turkomans. They may be styled only semi-nomads, the greater part cultivating the land, and the remainder, still exclusively pastoral, having lost with their savage character all the primitive virtues of their kindred tribe. (1970:272)

Vambery's value judgment regarding "primitive virtues" aside, his remarks are useful evidence for associating the Ersari with a semi-nomadic or totally agricultural way of life well before they arrived in Afghan Turkestan in large numbers after the October Revolution.

## THE PAŠTUNS

The Paštuns (or Pathans, in the British literature) form approximately 50 percent of the total population of Afghanistan but are in the minority in the North. They are unequally distributed in the region,

being much more heavily represented in Katağan, their most recent area of immigration, than in Turkestan or Badaxšan. The Paštuns have been moving up and infiltrating the North over the course of more than two centuries. Various Afghan rulers, in the hope of either breaking up some dissident confederation of Paštun tribesmen or achieving domination over Turkestan, have sent groups of settlers to the North from traditional southern Paštun regions. One of the early waves of Paštuns arrived in the course of the Afghan (Paštun-led) invasion of Iran in the early eighteenth century; however, it was in the middle of late nineteenth century when more sizable bodies of Paštun nomads turned up in the North under the prompting of the Amirs Dost Mohammed (1835–63) and Abdurrahman (1880–1901). In addition, a large number of Paštuns appear periodically in Turkestan each year as a result of seasonal nomadic migrations that start as far south as Kandahar and move across the Hazarajat (central Afghanistan) to the North.

Study of the northern Paštuns has barely begun; Richard and Nancy Tapper completed intensive fieldwork in 1971 and 1972, and we must look forward to their publications for the first serious work on Paštuns (both nomads and villagers) in Turkestan. While Paštuns maintain the considerable ethnic distinctiveness that characterizes them across the wide sweep of their areas of habitation (cf. Barth 1969a), they have also come to terms with the basic Uzbek-Tajik culture of the North; of this, more below. In demographic terms, sedentary northern Paštuns tend to form isolated encampments or villages (e.g., Paštunkot near Maimana), or even separate quarters of a village if they are in the minority. They make up only a very small percentage of the urban population. For the Saripul region (town and countryside), early estimates by the Tappers (1973:p.c.) set the Paštun population at 25 percent of the total.

### SMALLER GROUPS

Like all of Afghanistan, the North shelters pockets of ethnic populations of highly diverse backgrounds and sometimes insignificant size. Among the larger of these small minorities are the Hazaras, who spill into the North from their homeland, the Hazarajat. Though the origin of the Hazaras remains unclear despite considerable theorizing (Hudson and Bacon 1941; Schurmann 1961), it is at least apparent that they have had a very complex past, at least partially formed by contact with Mongols. Perhaps Schurmann's judgment is useful here: "Just as we know that the term Tadjik covers a number of diverse ethnic and culture groups, so must we remember that the same thing applies to the

term Hazara" (1961:119). They are easily singled out as a group today, however, by their distinctive appearance (heavily Mongoloid) and their special dialect of Persian (Hazaragi), and they usually end up at the bottom of whatever community they live in.

Hazaras have occasionally been imported in large numbers to the North for specific purposes. Under Murad Beg, the Uzbek ruler of the short-lived Kunduz empire of the early nineteenth century, an English observer was able to meet "a Hazara of the Deh Kundi tribe, bringing part of the yearly slave tribute to Kunduz" (Wood 1872:132). Such importations perhaps account for the considerable Hazara populations in parts of Katağan today. For the most part, however, Hazaras are found in the southern foothill region close to the Hazarajat — for example, near Saripul and Sangčerak, where the Tappers (1973:p.c.) estimate their numbers at 10 percent of the population.

Similar to the Hazaras in ethnic complexity and area of provenience are the members of various small groups lumped together under the term Aimaq in the North. To a great extent these peoples have fused with and adopted the language of either the Uzbeks (e.g., in Andxoi) or the Tajiks (e.g., in Saripul). Two other groups of rather obscure origin also deserve mention: the Arabs and the Moğols. Schurmann, who has devoted considerable effort to the study of these groups, writes of the Arabs that they are not related to modern Arabs but may be connected to Turkmen tribes claiming Arab descent, to Uzbek tribes such as those named Arab and Qurais, or to those Afghans who are called Sayyids. However, "it is still a question whether there are any basic relationships between these various groups, and what their relation to the main body of Arabs further west is" (Schurmann 1961:102). Arabs tend to be nomadic or seminomadic and to be looked down upon by other ethnic groups.

Turning to the Moğol, they are no less enigmatic a group than the others just outlined. Despite their name, which means "Mongol," they are less Mongoloid in appearance than the Hazaras, yet they retain enough of a vestige of Mongolian speech to keep the interest of linguists and ethnographers high. Their basic homeland is in central Afghanistan (the Ğorat). In the North, they have "very little contact with the people surrounding them . . . they never intermarry. The Uzbeks and Arabs despise the Moghols and have little to do with them" (Schurmann 1961:400).

Rounding out the list of ethnic groups, we must not forget the Jews, no longer represented in the North but once an important component of the population. Indeed, as Le Strange noted regarding Maimana,



In the earlier middle ages it was called Al-Yahudan, or Al-Yahudyah, the 'Jews' Town,' and was often counted as the capital of Juzjan . . . the name was changed to Maymanah, meaning 'the Auspicious Town,' for the sake of good augury, since 'Jew-town' to the Moslems was a term of reproach. . . . (1905:424)

Despite this snub to Jewish importance, there was apparently no tradition of persecution of the Jews; Vambéry noted for the fifty families of Jews he observed that along with "a few Hindoos, and Afghans" they "enjoy equal rights, and are not disturbed for reasons of religion or nationality" (1865:292). This era of goodwill, however, ended in the 1930s, when the king, Zahir Shah, instituted a policy of forced emigration of all Jews from the entire North to Kabul. As of 1968, only one Jew remained in Balx, where he was employed to write out Muslim amulets (*tawiz*), which are sometimes considered particularly efficacious when written by non-Muslims.

Finally, we must mention the other Turkic groups of Central Asian origin, the Kazakhs, Kirghiz, and Karakalpaks. The last-named are hard to find, but are rumored to live in the North (Jarring 1939:76). The Kirghiz are found only in the far Pamirs and thus only marginally in Afghanistan — in the Waxan corridor — and they extend naturally across the Soviet frontier from their homeland in Kirghizia. Jarring has estimated their numbers at 3,000 (1939:70). The Kirghiz are the only Central Asians who still travel freely across the Soviet Afghan border. The Kazakhs, on the other hand, are quite cut off from their homeland. They are located primarily in Kunduz and Mazar-i Šarif. Those in the latter city, for whom I have some data, number about 500, and all stem from the Alma-Ata area of Kazakhstan (shown on Map 1.1), having emigrated around 1932. They are involved in the manufacture and sale of the *čapan*, the ubiquitous Turkestani long cloak worn by nearly all ethnic groups. Considerable pockets of Kazakh population can also be found in Kabul and Herat.

## DEFINITION OF AREAS

Having completed a basic survey of the peoples of the North, we can attempt a description of the three basic regions — Turkestan, Katağan, and Badaxšan — that is more meaningful than the list of their constituent provinces given at the beginning of this Introduction.

### Turkestan

As we shall see below, Turkestan's neighboring region, Katağan, has a similarly large Turkic population and an analogous mixture of other ethnic groups. In addition, Herat has a Turkmen population,

perhaps qualifying it for membership in "Turk-i stan." A certain confusion about the identity of Turkestan can be detected among native informants, some of whom group Turkestan together with Katağan against Badaxšan, while others see Katağan and Badaxšan as a unit distinguished from Turkestan.

The roots of this problem lie in the historical development of the region. Turkestan is the area where numerous small Uzbek city-states held sway for many centuries, until the final consolidation of power by Amir Abdurrahman in the late nineteenth century did away once and for all with the independence of Aqča, Šiberğan, Saripul, Andxoi, and Maimana. Turkestan was the buffer zone between the Khan of Buxara and the Amir of Kabul, much as all of Afghanistan was a pawn in the great imperial game between Czarist Russia and the British Empire. Khanikoff, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, observed:

Most of those who have written on Central Asia have complained of the difficulties they have had to encounter in the attempt to determine its limits. . . . We lament that on the present occasion, we are forced to join in the general complaint, because the Khanate of Bokhara, like the states which are its neighbors, has no fixed boundaries, sanctioned by time, or circumscribed by international treaties. They expand or contract according to the strength or weakness of its rulers. (1845:1-2)

A region of wavering boundaries and shifting petty warfare, Turkestan was nevertheless a recognizable entity during brief periods when parts of the region were consolidated into one or another short-lived empire (such as Murad Beg's in the 1830s, to be discussed below). It remained a zone of changeable influence, never the center and always the target of imperial ambition. It is only today, with the sealing of the Soviet border and the development of a strong Afghan state, that the area is becoming just a provincial region with great local color rather than an important arena of Central Asian politics.

### **Katağan**

East of Turkestan lies Katağan. The difficulty of defining a Turkestani-Katağani border has already been touched upon, and this is part of the larger "Katağan question." Many informants consider Katağan to be a separate region, but what is their reason for this belief? Katağan exhibits a composition quite similar ethnically to that of Turkestan, and geographically it features no significant boundaries. Although I have been offered a variety of ingenious etymologies for the term Katağan, the identification of the region with an Uzbek tribal name strikes me as the most attractive explanation. The Katağan tribe of Uzbeks was located in the area that now bears its name, as witnessed

by Capt. Wood in the early nineteenth century (1872:134), and it still occupies regions of southern Uzbekistan adjacent to Katağan, where it is considered one of the older groups in the population (Karmysheva 1964:51).

Katağan was, until recently, a single province of Afghanistan, comprising the present provinces of Bağlan, Kunduz, and Taxor. Clearly the Afghan government thought of the area as a unit, but this concept of Katağan, like that of Turkestan, probably relates more to historical vicissitudes than to ethnic or geographic demarcation. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a strong Uzbek chieftain named Murad Beg established his domain over a considerable sector of northern Afghanistan. Wood stated that Murad Beg's "plundering expeditions embrace the whole of the upper waters of the Oxus, from the frontier of China on the East to the river that runs through Balkh, the mother of cities, on the West" (1872:140). Murad Beg conquered Badaxšan in 1823, after which he "destroyed Fyzabad, and forcibly removed its inhabitants to Kunduz" (Wood 1872:160). Thus the Uzbek leader unified a large area of the North, bringing both Badaxšan and eastern Turkestan into a realm centered in Kunduz. This could be called a Katağani empire, which was solidified by the bringing of settlers from rebellious Badaxšan and slaves from the Hazarajat. If we assume that the realm of Murad Beg remained alive in terminology long after its collapse under pressure from Kabul and Buxara, we might have the basis for both the concept and the term Katağan.

We can take this historical background one step further, adding information relating to the living conditions in Katağan. Wood, along with many other older writers, quoted the saying, "If you wish to die, go to Kunduz" (1872: 258) — a proverb referring to the high incidence of malaria in the Kunduz area, indeed in all Katağan. This is the reason Kunduz always remained a neglected town, despite its being the nominal center of Murad Beg's domain. As Wood noted, "Kunduz, the capital of Murad Beg, is one of the most wretched in his dominions. Five or six hundred mud hovels contain its fixed population . . ." (1872:138). Thus Katağan was, in a sense, "unified," thanks to its insalubrious climate. However, a thorough antimalaria campaign was initiated by the Afghan government in the 1920s and 1930s, and it resulted in the opening up of considerable new land for cultivation and for the building of new towns (of this, more in Chapter 2). This "Katağan revolution" brought about sweeping changes in the Afghan North. The social effects of this change will occupy us later; suffice it for now to point out that the modern development of Katağan, coupled with its nineteenth-century role as the center of a large prin-

ciality, probably forms the underlying rationale for the popular definition of the area as a separate region of the North, its lack of ethnic and geographic distinctiveness notwithstanding.

To the east, Katağan has a rather extensive border area with Badaxšan, the easternmost sector of northern Afghanistan. From Taluqān to Kešm extends a kind of regional "no-man's-land that is neither quite Katağan nor Badaxšan, to judge by local residents' conflicting definitions. Here one encounters numerous old Uzbek settlers (many of whom retain vestiges of their earlier seminomadic life), some splinter groups such as the Baluch enclave near Kešm, and the first sizable groups of mountain Tajiks of Badaxšani origin. No doubt Murad Beg's forcible introduction of Badaxšanis into eastern Katağan strengthened the area's role as a border zone. We shall see in Chapter 2 how this situation has influenced the town of Kešm in particular.

Thus Katağan, though it has an important Turkic population and is not set off by strong topographical boundaries, has as a result of its history come to be a recognizable segment of the North.

### **Badaxšan**

Past Kešm to the east, one is never in doubt that a new region has been reached. The river that guides one's journey all the way from Kunduz joins the Kokča, a main tributary of the Oxus, and the trip continues along the narrow defile of the Kokča valley upstream to Faizabad, some five hours distant by jeep. The road is dangerous ground, for it runs directly next to the river, often at the same level, and is thus subject to the whims of the turbulent Kokča. Frequent washouts, especially in the summer flood season, cut Badaxšan off from the world, except for limited air traffic.

Of the three regions of the North, Badaxšan is by far the most homogenous ethnically. Here the Turkmen populations phase out, and the Uzbeks fall to a much lower proportion vis-à-vis the mountain Tajiks. Travel in Badaxšan is accomplished mostly by horseback, for east of Faizabad there is only a rudimentary road running to Iškašim and some distance south to Munjan. Thus the inhabitants of the valleys in this highly mountainous region keep mostly to themselves and have preserved many archaic habits and beliefs. What is remarkable about Badaxšan, as we shall see in the case of music, is its cultural unity, which transcends the basic difficulty of transport.

Badaxšan province extends all the way out the Waxan corridor to the Afghan-Chinese border, where the Hindu Kush joins the Pamirs at "the roof of the world." Out there, the celebrated Marco Polo sheep, a spectacular mountain goat, is hunted by the idle rich of the West.

The existence of pocket communities of "Pamir Tajiks" has already been noted; these peoples are treasured by linguists and other fieldworkers for their archaic practices and speech, but they have hardly been seriously studied or discussed, except in a few important Soviet monographs dealing with populations on the other side of the Panj river (especially Andreev 1953). Thoroughgoing Badaxšan-Pamir studies should be a main task of ethnographic research in Afghanistan, for this mountain refuge region is more tenacious in maintaining traditions than any other area of the North.