Cross-cultural perspectives in popular music: the case of Afghanistan

by JOHN BAILY

The problem of definition

It is inevitable that the first issue of this yearbook will raise questions about the use of the term 'popular music'. I do not believe that this question is going to be easy to answer and, as a precaution, I think we should regard quick and seemingly clearcut solutions with suspicion. In fact, we may eventually have to operate with intuitive, poorly defined and rather elastic definitions of popular music. Before we resort to that expedient, however, the problem of definition must be considered and discussed from various points of view.

The editors have offered the following two definitions (the numbering is mine):

(1) From one point of view 'popular music' exists in any stratified society. It is seen as the music of the mass of the people . . . as against that of an élite.

(2) From another point of view there is at the very least a significant qualitative change, both in the meaning which is felt to attach to the term and in the processes to which the music owes its life, when a society undergoes industrialisation. From this point of view popular music is typical of societies with a relatively highly developed division of labour and a clear distinction between producers and consumers, in which cultural products are created largely by professionals, sold in a mass market and reproduced through mass media. (P. 1 above)

The first of these definitions is very general, the second very specific. Within the Western world they are perhaps appropriate. But are they valid at a cross-cultural level? Consideration of varieties of world music suggests that 'popular music' is a transcultural phenomenon. In this wider context the definitions seem more questionable. The first is too loose, too unspecific, and does not distinguish between the possibly separate analytical categories of 'popular' and 'folk' music. The second definition is too tight because it implies that 'popular music' is characteristic only of industrialised societies. We shall return to this matter later.

In this paper I shall describe in some detail a kind of music typical of the cities of Afghanistan that I believe can be legitimately labelled
'popular music'. Beyond the ethnographic data I am also concerned with the theoretical issue of the basis on which we label a genre of music as 'popular music'. In justifying the use of this label cross-culturally one is in effect having to define the characteristics of popular music.

Two points should be made in relation to this theoretical issue. Firstly, the ethnomusicological approach suggests that labels such as 'art music', 'folk music' and 'popular music' can be used with justification in a cross-cultural context only when the society concerned makes such distinctions itself. Otherwise we are in danger of distorting the data to fit preconceived analytical concepts and definitions that may be totally inappropriate. We must try to understand a music system from the inside, from the point of view of the people who create and use the music. For example, in the case of the term 'art music' it seems perfectly justified to use this term for those musics of Asia that are considered to be 'art' by the people themselves. Use of the term 'art music' implies that the society concerned distinguishes at least two kinds of music: 'art' and something else that is not 'art'. The music of an hypothetical society that has only one kind of music could not be analytically labelled as 'art', 'folk' or anything else, for there is no contrast, it is simply 'music' as opposed to 'non-music'.

Secondly, even if we agree that we should only use the term 'popular music' when it corresponds to a native category in the folk view,* we are still left with a definitional problem. We have to put forward some criteria in order to test whether what appears on the surface to be a 'popular music' category in another music system really does correspond to our own analytical concept of 'popular music'. Some possible criteria for identifying 'popular music' will be suggested later in the paper. These criteria amount to a partial definition of 'popular music'.

Major categories of music in the thinking of Heratis

The ethnographic data to be described were collected in Herat Province in western Afghanistan during two years' ethnomusicological fieldwork in the mid-1970s.† Most of my fieldwork was carried out in the city of Herat, the third largest city in Afghanistan, eighty miles

* By 'folk view' I refer to the perceptions and cognitions of the people themselves. The important distinction between native and analytical evaluations is discussed in Merriam 1964, pp. 31–2. Where Merriam uses the term 'folk-evaluation', I prefer 'folk view'.

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from the Iranian border. Reference is also made to Radio Afghanistan, broadcasting from Kabul, the capital (in eastern Afghanistan), but extensive research has not been carried out at the radio station.*

Any musical ethnography must go into the question of how the people classify the different kinds of music that they use. This matter is of crucial importance, for, as already explained, we can only talk about a genre of music as 'popular music' if it corresponds to an equivalent native concept. For various reasons the folk classification used by a people is often difficult to elucidate. Distinctions that may appear obvious to the outsider may not be apparent to the people (suggesting that the outsider has failed to understand the folk view), or a category may be found to exist in their thinking but to have no generally agreed label.

A faithful representation of the ways that Heratis distinguish and label different genres of music would be rather complex and beyond the scope of this paper. As a simplification let us accept that amongst their categories the four shown in Figure 1 are of major importance. In Figure 1 the four categories are represented as being at the same level of a system of classification.

Musiqi-ye klasik refers to Hindustani vocal music of the khayal and tarana genres, which is widely known in Afghanistan and is performed by some Afghan† musicians. In Afghanistan this genre is regarded as 'art music'. The word klasik is the English word 'classical', probably derived from India, where Hindustani music is often referred to as 'Indian classical music'.

Ghazalkhani refers to the singing of serious Persian poetry in the ghazal form. Some of the poetry used comes from the great poets of the past, such as Hafez and Sa’di; some is of more recent provenance, penned by Afghan and Indian-born poets writing in Persian. Similar ghazals (in Urdu rather than Persian) are performed in India and Pakistan. In certain contexts this is also regarded as 'art music' by Heratis.

Musiqi-ye mahali refers to 'local music'. In Herat, this label refers to those kinds of music that the people identify as Herati. Certain kinds of mahali could be regarded as 'folk music', being handed down through oral tradition over the generations and being performed by non-

* In writing about the use of music in Afghanistan, I have adopted the convention known as the 'ethnographic present', in which a state of affairs that existed in the past is described in the present tense. Political events in Afghanistan since 1978 make it highly unlikely that the situation I describe persists unchanged.

† I use the term 'Afghan' here to refer to inhabitants of Afghanistan irrespective of ethnic origins. The two main ethnic groups are Pashtuns and Tajiks; most inhabitants of Herat are the latter. The two official languages are Pashtu and Persian. Persian is the language of Herat.
specialists. 'Local music' from other regions is often identified by Heratis in ethnic or geographical terms, viz. Uzbeki (Uzbek, an ethnic group) or shomali (northern).

*Kiliwali* is tentatively labelled in Figure 1 as 'popular music'. The major characteristics of this genre will be described in the remainder of this paper. Essentially, the term refers to a kind of urban music broadcast from the radio station and copied over the rest of the country, especially in the towns and cities.

A few words of qualification are needed about my use of the term *kiliwali*. This Pashtu word means 'of the village', and when used in Pashtu properly refers to Pashtun regional music, the 'ethnic' music of the Pashtuns. In Herat, which is Persian-speaking, the term *kiliwali* is used by some people, especially by musicians, to refer to those genres of music which are discussed below, and which have been tentatively labelled 'popular music'. They probably use this label because the main formal and structural characteristics of the music were originally derived from Pashtun regional music. I use the term for simplicity of expression, and because it is used by some Heratis.

**Main features of *kiliwali* music**

**Musical aspects**

*Kiliwali* has a distinct musical style: two of its most dominant features are the constant alternation of vocal and instrumental sections, and the frequent use of rhythmic cadential devices. As with other genres of Afghan music, *kiliwali* is monophonic in concept (i.e. linear melody with no vertical harmonic or polyphonic component) and heterophonic in execution (because the instruments that accompany the singer each play the melodic line slightly differently). There is no consistent use of continuous drones. *Kiliwali* uses a series of modes which can, for convenience, be thought of as corresponding to certain Hindustani modes (*ragas*). Most *kiliwali* music is in one of three modes: *Bairami*, *Pari* and *Kesturi*.

*Kiliwali* music has both vocal and instrumental aspects. Most of the
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items in the repertory are songs, each with its own text and melody and associated instrumental piece. In most performances of kiliwali the singer is accompanied by melodic and rhythmic musical instruments. The song itself is usually divided into sections that we might label 'verse' and 'refrain' (beit and pazarb) and these are usually sung to different, but often related, melodies, known as the antara and the astai.

After the refrain has been sung the instruments may continue playing the melody of the astai as an instrumental refrain, coming to an end with a pronounced rhythmic cadence and a slight pause (istad, the stop). This instrumental section is called the duni, and it generally shows some degree of acceleration in tempo before the rhythmic cadence. After the duni it is usual to insert another instrumental section, the naghme, which has a quite different melody from the astai and antara. This is played several times and again comes to a rest with a rhythmic cadence before the singer starts the next verse. Each song has its own naghme associated with it. It is also possible to add other instrumental sections.

It is acceptable for song melodies with attendant naghmes to be played as instrumental pieces, either solo or by a group of instruments. This is especially characteristic of amateur musicians, where there are more competent instrumentalists than singers. There are also a few purely instrumental pieces in the kiliwali repertory, some of them played as dance music.

It is not possible to go into the matter of song texts here. The songs deal with a variety of topics. The bulk of them are love-songs, either of a romantic kind, such as those describing the physical attributes of the beloved, or on the unrequited love theme. These texts are not considered to be 'good poetry' in comparison with the texts used for ghazalkhani. The performance of a song takes five to ten minutes, though performances on the radio are usually shorter (and often omit the duni section).

Although song is such an important element of kiliwali and there can be no doubt that the inner structure of the music shows the influence of linguistic and poetic constraints, the music is conceived of as something apart from song, as conforming to its own set of musical rules. It is a system of organised sounds having two essential elements: sor (pitch modulation) and lai (metred rhythm).

Occurrence and use

It is necessary to distinguish between the centre and the periphery of the kiliwali phenomenon. The periphery consists of the cities and
towns of Afghanistan that support their own local *kiliwali* music-making. Here we look at the periphery only from the point of view of Herat. Centre and periphery together form a two-way communication system, from the centre to the periphery and from the periphery to the centre. There is also some communication directly between different parts of the periphery. These relationships are represented in Figure 2.

![Diagram of Centre and Periphery of the *kiliwali* Network](image)

Figure 2. Centre and periphery of the *kiliwali* network

*The radio station as the centre*

The only radio station in Afghanistan is that in Kabul, known originally as Radio Kabul, later called Radio Afghanistan. The radio station is located in a modern complex of buildings in a suburb of Kabul, near the airport, and was built with Soviet aid. The large staff is engaged in planning and making all sorts of programmes: news; educational programmes for select groups such as women, farmers and children; religious programmes; plays; panel games; and music. Some of the programming staff have received training abroad. Most broadcasting is in Persian and Pashtu, with a few programmes in the languages of ethnic minorities. Some English language programmes are also broadcast.

The radio station broadcasts many kinds of music including the four types mentioned in Figure 1. Here we refer only to the *kiliwali* category. For the making of music programmes the station employs both instrumentalists and singers. The instrumentalists are all men. Many of them are from hereditary musician families living in the musicians' quarter in the old city. Instrumentalists are full-time employees of the radio station; some have worked there for many years. A few of them are famous masters (*ustads*) who sometimes perform solo instrumental music, but most of the time the instrumentalists work together in various orchestras.

For example, the *Orkestra Bozorg* (the Big Orchestra), as I observed it rehearsing for a song on 3 October 1976, consisted of: two *rubabs* (short-necked plucked Afghan lutes), two *tanburs* (long-necked plucked Afghan lutes), mandoline, Spanish guitar, *tulak* (cross-blown wooden Afghan flute), Boehm flute, piccolo, two tenor saxophones,
clarinet, piano, string bass (plucked, not bowed), *tabla* (Indian drum pair), *sitar* (long-necked plucked Indian lute), *delruba* (bowed Indian lute). This orchestra shows a mixture of Afghan, Indian and Western instruments. The precise instrumentation of the big orchestra probably varies from day to day.

In the smaller ensembles the instruments are more usually those associated with Afghan urban music as played in the provinces. Some of these are regarded as Afghan instruments: *rubab*, *tanbur*, fourteen-stringed *dutar*, *sarinda/sarang* (bowed lute), *ghichak* (bowed lute) and drums such as *dhol* and *zirbaghali*. Others have come originally from India but have been used in Afghanistan for long enough to have become fully assimilated: *'armonia* (hand-blown harmonium), *tabla*, *delruba*, *sarangi* (bowed lute). It is striking how many kinds of lutes are used by the Afghans.

Both male and female singers work at Radio Afghanistan, and they are of both amateur and hereditary professional origins. Few, if any, are employed full time simply as singers. A few of the amateur singers who are from the educated middle class are employed as production and administrative staff and also make some broadcasts as singers. A very few are employed as song-writer-singers, with contracts to compose and record a fixed number of songs per month. There are many other singers who regularly perform for the radio and who are paid on a per recording basis.

The radio station is also ready to record almost any musician from the provinces who is visiting Kabul. It is a matter of considerable prestige for a singer or instrumentalist, amateur or professional, to have made a tape at the esteshan (*station*, another English word). This is one way in which the periphery feeds back on to the centre. A brief survey of the holdings of the radio archives in 1977 showed that sixty-three Heratis (nearly all of them singers) had made tapes at the radio station. Most of them were residents of Herat; a few had moved to Kabul. Tape recording at Radio Afghanistan only started in the 1960s; before then, all music broadcasts were live.

Some of the best-known radio singers of *kiliwali* have a special social status as 'stars' (see Slobin 1974, pp. 245–6). Particular songs are identified with known artists and are viewed with reference to the total body of that individual's creative work (as composer and/or performer). There is keen interest in the latest work of the individual. The private lives of these singers are of considerable interest to music 'buffs' and there is much gossip about them in these circles. Familiarity with a 'star system' has come about in part through the Indian films that play in Afghan cinemas, the sale of postcard portraits of famous Indian actors and actresses and magazine articles about them.
Figure 3. A well-known Kabuli radio singer, Zaland, educated, of amateur origin, employed (formerly) as singer and song-writer by the Ministry for Information and Culture. Performing at a Ramazan concert in a modern hotel in Herat. Note his suit and tie, symbols of his urbanity, the standing position while he plays the 'armonia, the accompanying dhol (traditional Afghan drum), radio-cassette machines with microphones mounted on the aerials (dehruba- and flute-players in accompanying ensemble not visible).
We turn now to the important matter of the origins of the songs in the *kiliwali* repertory. There is a steady turnover of the repertory, with new songs continually being created and older ones falling into disuse. Many new songs are written by those Kabuli singers who are regularly associated with the radio, a few of whom have contracts to supply new songs. Amongst these compositions various styles within the *kiliwali* genre can be distinguished.

Local songs (*mahali*) from different regions of Afghanistan also form an important input to the repertory. Some singers have made trips to the provinces to learn *mahali* songs, or such songs may have been recorded at the station by provincial musicians, broadcast, and taken over by a radio singer. In either case the songs are reworked into the *kiliwali* mould, a *naghme* is composed and they are broadcast with orchestral accompaniment, often provided by a large orchestra like that already described. In this way a *mahali* song enters the *kiliwali* repertory. Though it may still be recognised as a local song, especially by the people from whose region it has come, it has been transformed into a *kiliwali* song, a new song in the radio repertory.

Another source of new songs is provided by the films from India and Pakistan which are shown in the cinemas of Kabul and other cities and large towns and are well attended by Afghan audiences. Most Indian films rely heavily on music and dance. Film (*filmi*) song texts are usually in Hindi or Urdu (very occasionally a song in Persian is found) and are not really comprehensible to most Afghans. This does not seem to detract from the audience’s appreciation of them. This music has had an important influence in Kabul and other cities. In some cases radio singers have adopted such songs, making up a new text in Persian, or fitting a pre-existing text to the tune. *Filmi* songs are sometimes sung with nonsense words that approximate the sounds of the original. Again, some Kabuli song-writers copy the style of Indian film songs in their new works.

A further source of new songs is Iran. In the 1970s Iran was undergoing a period of strong interest in music, with regular radio and television broadcasts and thriving record and tape companies (see Nettl 1972, who has no hesitation in calling this ‘popular music’). Some Iranian songs, transmitted by radio or cassette, are adopted by Afghans, especially in Herat, and adapted to the *kiliwali* style. Some such songs have reached Radio Afghanistan (usually via Herat) to be performed by the radio station’s regular singers. It is likely that Pakistan and possibly Tajikistan (a republic of Soviet Central Asia) also contribute in some measure to the *kiliwali* repertory.
We come now to examine the periphery of the kiliwali network as illustrated by the example of Herat. Although there are bound to be local variations, Herat can be considered representative of the periphery as a whole. The music-making at Radio Afghanistan would be of little interest to us if it did not also stimulate, support and provide a model for music-making in the provinces.

Despite the existence of a long-standing prejudice against music from an orthodox Islamic viewpoint, weaker now than in the past but still operative, Herat city is the scene of many sorts of musical activity. Music is an indispensable part of a variety of social situations. Live music is played at wedding parties, in the theatre, at visiting circuses, at concerts during the month of fasting (Ramazan), at tea-booths set up at the frequent springtime country fairs (meles), at dancing-boy parties (bache bazi), at mehmanis (dinner served to guests at a private house), shau nishinis ('sitting together' till late at night) and shauqs (get-togethers of amateur musicians) and on various other occasions.

With certain exceptions (such as female singers in the male patronised theatre) there is separate music-making for men and women, with male and female musicians playing exclusively to male and female audiences respectively. This makes for a social division between male and female musicians. A second important distinction made by Heratis is between professional and amateur musicians (see Baily 1979 for a discussion of this as it applies to men). Analytically, we can distinguish four types of performer (male professional, male amateur, female professional and female amateur), though this is something of a simplification of the over-all situation, for other categories of performer occur too.

The four kinds of musician perform in rather different social contexts, they use different musical instruments to accompany their singing and they utilise different genres of music. Table 1 attempts to summarise these data.

Each of the four categories of musician performs at least some kiliwali. The sound of kiliwali as produced by Heratis is inevitably different from the 'radio sound'. In part this arises from the fact that in Herat music is performed 'in context', in dynamic social situations which inevitably operate to control the performance. More interesting from the point of view of ethnomusicological analysis are the large differences that exist between the four categories of Herati performer in terms of the sounds they produce. Ultimately these differences must be related to variations in the social organisation of the groups of people who perform and use the music. These underlying social factors are manifest in more obvious factors affecting sound production,
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Table 1. Comparison of four types of musician. (Instruments given in parentheses have some but not frequent use.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Social contexts</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Genres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male professional*</td>
<td>weddings</td>
<td>'armonia</td>
<td>klasik</td>
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<td></td>
<td>theatre</td>
<td>tabla</td>
<td>ghazal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>circuses</td>
<td>rubab</td>
<td>kiliwali</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Ramazan</em> concerts</td>
<td>dutar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>meles</td>
<td>zirbaghali</td>
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<td></td>
<td>dancing-boy parties</td>
<td>(delruba)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male amateur</td>
<td>small private parties</td>
<td>'armonia</td>
<td>kiliwali</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rubab</td>
<td>(mahali)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>dutar(s)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>zirbaghali</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tanbur</td>
<td>(chahartar†)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(flutes)</td>
<td>(daire‡)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female professional</td>
<td>weddings</td>
<td>'armonia</td>
<td>kiliwali</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>tabla</td>
<td>mahali</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>daire</td>
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<tr>
<td>female amateur</td>
<td>small private parties</td>
<td>daire</td>
<td>mahali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>domestic entertainment</td>
<td>('armonia)</td>
<td>kiliwali</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for children</td>
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* Baily 1979 distinguishes between two kinds of male professional musician on the basis of recruitment: kesbi, hereditary professional; and shauqi-kesbi, amateur who becomes a professional musician. To avoid unnecessary technicalities, these two groups are treated as a single category here.

† Chahartar: long-necked Iranian plucked lute.
‡ Daire: frame drum.

such as knowledge of a folk theory of music, the musical instruments used and development of instrumental skills.

Becoming familiar with the repertory and learning the newest songs involves several processes. Musicians themselves are always on the lookout for the emergence of new songs. Initially these are learned direct from the radio. Professional musicians can usually learn the melodies of the song and instrumental section after one or two hearings but they are learned more laboriously, and often incorrectly, by amateurs. The ability to learn quickly by ear is an essential skill for a professional musician in Afghanistan. Learning is made easier by the predictability of many Afghan melodies once the rules governing their organisation have been assimilated. Song texts may be written down; some singers even carry notebooks of texts with them, but never the
Figure 4. The periphery. A group of Herati musicians performing in a tent during one of the spring fairs, with singer-"armonia"-player, 2 dutar-players and zirbaghali (drum). The musicians are seated on a wooden bed and wear traditional dress. Re-creation of radio music.
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music in notated form. Sometimes musicians learn new songs from cassettes rather than direct from the radio. Once one singer is performing a new song others will begin learning it from him. If the audience likes it too, then it will probably enter the local repertory and be performed frequently for some months or even a year or two.

Rather little interest is expressed by Heratis in old items of the kiliwali repertory. It surprised me when I first discovered that songs described as qadimi ('ancient') or kohne ('worn out') were songs that had been common only five to ten years before. The attention of the Heratis is focussed on the latest songs, the ahang-e mod ('fashionable tunes') or khandan-e mod ('fashionable songs'). The word mod is derived from the French mode ('fashion'). Of an old song one may say az mod rafte ('out of fashion'). Amongst men, at least, there is little interest in Herati mahali songs unless they have been revitalised through radio broadcasting and so transformed into kiliwali.

One clear indicator of the transient popularity of songs is their usage by children. Apart from lullabies there are very few distinct children's songs in Herat, a fact that is possibly related to religious prejudice against music in the past. Children sing and dance during their games, and the songs they sing are adults' songs from the kiliwali repertory. At any one time the children seem to have a rather small repertory, perhaps no more than five or six songs, and they are usually songs that have been popular with adults a few months earlier and are perhaps already out of fashion.

The choice of songs sung at a performance event is to some extent controlled by the audience through a request system. At more formal public events such as large wedding receptions, Ramazan concerts and theatre performances, requests are written on the backs of postcards, usually showing Indian film stars or Iranian singers, and presented to the singer. In the theatre in Herat the names of the requesters are read out by the compère to the audience before each song is performed.

Professional musicians are well aware of the way the audience dictates what they play. Hereditary professional musicians in particular do not esteem kiliwali, which they regard as easy to play, with texts that are lacking in profound meaning, unlike ghazals, which are highly valued as poetry and considered a more difficult type of music to perform. Such musicians consider themselves servants of the public; their livelihood depends upon meeting the requirements of their audience. At their own occasional gatherings – for example, at the wedding of a musician, when the hereditary musicians take turns to perform – little or no kiliwali is played. Although such musicians perceive a discrepancy between the music they choose to play and the
music the public wants, this does not lead to alienation of the kind described by Becker (1951) for jazz musicians.

There is no record industry in Afghanistan. In Herat the cassette tape-recorder had come to occupy quite an important role in the 1970s. Ownership of radio-cassette machines was widespread amongst all strata of society. Thousands of Heratis who went to work as migrant labourers in Iran for a few months returned with these machines, or the money to buy them. Many Heratis make their own recordings of all the kinds of musical performance to which men have access. This has greatly increased the exposure of Herati musicians to their public. Members of the audience are considered to have the right to make recordings without charge and only at Ramazan concerts of visiting Kabul singers have I seen people paying to record.

There are also small tape businesses, run from shops in the main bazaars of Herat, that sell recordings of local musicians, made either live or in specially set up recording sessions. They also sell tapes made by similar businesses in Kabul and other cities. Herati musicians seem content that their music reaches a wider public and secures them more engagements, and do not expect to make significant income from making recordings for sale in the bazaar.

Social aspects

The origin of kiliwali music is closely linked with the history of radio broadcasting in Afghanistan. The following facts are derived from Gregorian (1969). Radio broadcasting in Afghanistan was initiated in 1925, in the time of the progressive King Amanullah (1919-29), who was deposed by a religious-based reaction to his attempt to modernise Afghanistan. During this time, radio achieved a small breakthrough, with an estimated 1,000 receiving-sets in Kabul in 1928. After the chaos that followed Amanullah’s departure, there was no serious move to resume broadcasts until 1936. Radio Kabul began experimental broadcasts in 1939 and was officially inaugurated the following year. The stated aims of the radio were (a) to spread the message of the Koran, (b) to reflect the national spirit, (c) to perpetuate the treasures of Afghan folklore and (d) to contribute to public education.

Broadcasting was seriously hampered during the Second World War by difficulties in obtaining new equipment or spares. Not until the late 1940s was an effective broadcasting service established that could be received in most parts of the country. In the early days, ownership of radio receivers was uncommon and the problem of reception was aggravated by the varying voltage of the electricity supply even in the largest cities. To assist with the dissemination of radio broadcasts,
receiver apparatus linked to loudspeaker systems in the main streets were set up in various cities, and they broadcast the news, music and popular programmes.

*Kiliwali* music seems to have originated in response to the need to create a music suitable for radio broadcasting. In the absence of accounts from the actual architects of the new music, only the broad outlines of the process can be discerned. It would seem that the new music was created through a mixing of elements already present in Afghanistan. The over-all form and style of *kiliwali* appears to have been drawn from Pashtun regional music. This connection is apparent in the use of instrumental sections, rhythmic cadences, certain modes and musical instruments. The Pashtun roots of the radio style may explain why the music as a whole is termed *kiliwali* (see remarks on page 108 above). Certain other elements may have come from a type of 'Persian music' formerly found in Kabul and Herat that had links with the 'art music' of Iran. Persian became the language of most *kiliwali* texts.

The creation of *kiliwali* involved both professional and amateur musicians but hereditary musicians whose fathers and grandfathers had been brought to Kabul from India as court musicians in the late nineteenth century seem to have played a crucial role. Ustad Qasem, who lived from 1882 to 1955, is celebrated as the 'Father of Music in Afghanistan'. In this connection it is interesting to note that a number of Indian 'art' musicians have been actively involved in making music for the Bombay film studios.

The broadcasting of this new kind of music has had other important social implications. These have been studied in Herat in connection with the invention of a new musical instrument, the fourteen-stringed Herati *dutar*, and are described by Baily (1976). In summary, the coming of radio music (in Herat) has been accompanied by an over-all increase in music-making and a decrease in religious prejudice against music. There has been an improvement in the social status of musicians, and an increase in the number of amateur musicians who turn professional. It is difficult not to interpret these changes as being directly linked with the decreasing power, political and social, of the religious establishment of orthodox mullahs and 'ulema (legists), and the gradual secularisation of Afghan society. It seems unlikely that the architects of *kiliwali* music were unaware that orthodox Islam would condemn their activities, and they may well have intended to use radio music to help change traditional values and undermine the authority of the religious establishment.
The identification of kiliwali as popular music

Up to this point we have considered some of the features of the Afghan kiliwali genre. The question that now has to be faced is whether or not this should be considered a type of popular music.

According to the second definition quoted above, 'popular music is typical of societies with a relatively highly developed division of labour and a clear distinction between producers and consumers, in which cultural products are created largely by professionals, sold in a mass market and reproduced through mass media'. It is also clear from this definition that these conditions typically come into being when a society undergoes industrialisation.

On some of these criteria kiliwali could be described as a type of popular music. Afghan urban society does have a relatively highly developed division of labour. There is a system of social stratification based mainly on wealth, consisting of three classes: landowners; merchants and shopkeepers; craftsmen, artisans and labourers. Afghan cities are important centres of commerce and manufacture, supporting a wide variety of professions and trades. There are certainly large differences between producers and consumers, and this applies to music as to other things: the professional musician is a highly differentiated economic specialist.

But although an Afghan city like Herat has a high degree of division of labour, it cannot be said to have undergone industrialisation in the Western sense of the word. There are a number of modern trades and skills but these are not apparently linked with a significant change in social organisation. If urban society has not changed fundamentally for a long time, and there has been no significant move towards industrialisation, then it is hard to explain the recent origin of kiliwali in terms of an industrialisation process. On this criterion it appears that kiliwali is not popular music.

However, I do not believe that the factor of industrialisation is crucial. There are other important features that allow us positively to identify kiliwali as popular music. It conforms to the following criteria, which are, I believe, characteristic of popular music as a transcultural category.

(1) The people themselves distinguish the genre in question as a distinct category, and contrast it with other kinds of music that they use.

(2) In contrast with the other kinds of music used by the society, popular music has a rapid turnover of repertory. The recognition of this fact by the people is an important part of their perception and appreciation of the music. Continual change in the repertory is not
simply accepted as an inevitable part of using the music, it is made into an issue of central interest.

(3) Popular music is closely associated with the sound recording and broadcasting media, which form an indispensable element in the network of communication between the users of the music – the creators, performers and audience.

The sound media are especially important in the process of creation of new music, but such music will later be recreated at the local level, where music becomes a medium of social interaction, part of a dynamic social process.

(4) Popular music involves the 'cult of personalities', with leading exponents elevated to a special social status.

Of the factors mentioned above, the one that seems to be of greatest importance is the involvement of the sound media. In one sense popular music is the music of the media, specifically, those kinds of music that have been created for the media, or in whose creation communication within a media network is important. The characteristics of popular music are to some extent the outcome of constraints inherent in the nature of the media. Identification of those constraints should be the focus of further research.

It follows that when mass sound media are set up in any society it is likely that a genre of popular music will come into being. The technology of the media is the product of industrialisation, but the media can be freely deployed in non-industrialised societies, with this as one probable result.

References


Discography

Examples of kiliwali music performed by singers and musicians at Radio Afghanistan can be found on the following two discs:


*Afghanistan: Music from the Crossroads of Asia*, Nonesuch H-72053 (Explorer series). Recording and commentary by Peter Ten Hoopen.