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The Musical Instruments of Afghanistan

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The Musical Instruments of Afghanistan

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This is the report on musical instruments studied during the First Survey on East-West Musical Intercourse, conducted in 1973. Among the instruments studied were *harmonia*, *tula*, *nai* (Aerophones), *rubab*, *tambur*, *dotar*, *panjtar*, *dambura*, *ghichak* (Chordophones), *zerbaghali*, *dohl* (Membranophones) and *tal(tsang)* (Idiophones). Instruments of Indian origin are the most popular in Afghanistan, followed by those of Central Asia, whereas instruments of Iranian origin, for the most part, have not been notably influential. That is, there exists a close relationship between East and North in the musical instruments of Afghanistan.

I. INTRODUCTION

This article is the report on musical instruments studied during the First Survey on East-West Musical Intercourse (Scientific research for music of Iran and Afghanistan), conducted in 1973. Primary data and secondary sources did not provide enough material to make a study of Iranian music, therefore this report deals only with the musical instruments of Afghanistan.

Compared with other parts of the world, the music of Afghanistan has been little studied. As with many other parts of the world, the little that we know at present of the realities of Afghan music is derived from just a few phonograph records. Consequently, few books or papers provided detailed information on Afghan musical instruments, except as fragmentary or concomitant explanations in books dealing with the music of neighboring cultures, and especially that of India. Even in Slobin's paper, one of the scholars of Afghan music, the description of musical instruments is general [SLOBIN 1970: 450-458]. The only systematic essay is by Hoerbürger, who attempted detailed analysis of folk music and folk musical instruments of Afghanistan. But his paper has many omissions because he emphasizes the music rather than musical instruments [HOERBURGER 1969]¹⁾.

Although the field research in Afghanistan lasted for only two months, and

1) The latest work of Slobin was received after completion of this article [SLOBIN 1976]. It is a comprehensive study of the music of North Afghanistan and mentions three instruments not studied in our field research: These are the *qobuz* (Chordophone), the *gergeranak* and the *qairaq* (Idiophones). Slobin also reports that the instrument called the *nai* (Aerophon) in this paper is known as the *türdük* in Northern Afghanistan.

therefore was not long enough to permit a thorough nation-wide investigation, a full study was conducted in the areas inhabited by the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and the Hazaras, among other ethnic groups. Field research could not be undertaken in frontier areas such as Nuristan, but nevertheless the musical instruments of these areas were studied in museums or elsewhere. Although the secondary data and other material on musical instruments collected during the course of this research are somewhat wanting, and the data are not comprehensive in that the whole of Afghanistan was not covered, and there were many constraints as a result of the research schedule, the data collected still provide valuable information which serves to fill several lacunae.

This report is based mainly on the data cards of the research supplemented by field data and material derived from a literature search, and describes the musical instruments of Afghanistan. The data for each instrument studied are organized in the following manner:

(1) NAME:

The local name and the origin or meaning of the name. If one name is used to refer to several different musical instruments, or one musical instrument is known by several different names, this fact is also noted;

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE:

General shape and dimensions, structure and the materials used;

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE:

Description of posture of the player, manner of holding, position, performance of the instrument and tonal features;

(4) PLAYER:

The age, ethnic group, occupation, and other characteristics of each performer of the instrument are indicated in various tables;

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION:

Ensemble form (formation of musical instruments) and description of the role and function of each instrument in the ensemble is indicated in various tables;

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS:

Closely related instruments played in neighboring musical cultures, particularly India and Iran, are documented.

Of these items, Name, Shape/Material/Structure, Player and Formation of Ensemble were based mainly on data cards and field survey data, items of Execution/Timbre and Function are derived from the author's own survey. Relationship with Other Areas was determined from the literature and on field data from countries other than Afghanistan.

The classification of musical instruments used here is that of Mahillon-Horn-

bostel-Sachs, a standardised classification in ethnomusicology. Soon, however, I will present a new method for classifying musical instruments.

II. AEROPHONES

1. Harmonia

(1) NAME

Sometimes called "*armonia*" when the first "h" sound disappears. It is also called "*harmonium*".

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

Keyboards are arranged externally on a wooden square box with the ventilator. Usually it has more than 36 (3 octaves) keys and tuning is similar to the western scale. In overall size it is somewhat larger than the *accordion*.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

Normally the player sits cross-legged before the instrument which is set on the floor with the keyboard upward. The ventilator is constantly moved with one hand to send air through the instrument and the keys are depressed with the other hand. As sound is produced by reeds vibrated by the passage of air like the *accordion* and the *pipe organ*, the timbre of these instruments resemble one another.

(4) PLAYER

The ethnic group, age, occupation and other details of the *harmonia* player are given in the Table 1. "Professional" indicates that a player performs music to make a living. In Afghanistan the term "professional musician" is not limited only to musicians who perform on the radio or to famous, big-city performers, whose social

Table 1. *Harmonia* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date	Remarks
Pashtun	32	professional	Kabul	11. 7. 1973	
Tajik	16	barber	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973	song, Tambur
Tajik	18	student	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973	Zerbaghali
Tajik	38	shopkeeper	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973	Ghichak
Tajik	29	barber	Kunduz	05. 8. 1973	song
Tajik	18	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973	song
Pashtun	20	professional	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973	song
Pashtun	25	professional	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973	
Pashtun	25	professional	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973	song
Pashtun	20	professional	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973	
Pashtun	35	professional	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973	

status is comparatively high, but also to the many kinds of small, rural bands that play at weddings or hotel banquets, as well as to street performers, and the like. When a *harmonia* player also sings or plays other instruments, it is indicated under "remarks".

As is clear from Table 1, *harmonia* players are limited to the Pashtuns and the Tajiks, the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan. Many of them are also professional young musicians in their twenties. It is thought that there are many young *harmonia* players in Afghanistan because they also sing when they play the instrument. All *dambura* or *zerbaghali* players who sing while playing the instrument, are younger than 20 years old age (Table 11, Table 15). This probably means that in Afghanistan it is considered that the voice of youth is far more beautiful than that of older people, and there are many *harmonia* players who sing songs as they play the instrument, compared with performers of other instruments, so many *harmonia* players are relatively young.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

The instrumental formation of the ensemble, including the *harmonia*, is shown in Table 2. Songs are sung with an instrumental accompaniment, but sometimes the ensemble plays without songs being sung. They are distinguished by writing "song" in parentheses when the ensemble also performs with songs.

As is shown in Table 2 the ensemble that includes the *harmonia* always consists of more than three kinds of instruments. It basically consists of the *harmonia*, a string instrument(s) and a drum (or the metal percussion instrument), and almost always the ensemble goes with songs. This style of ensemble (song + *harmonia* + string instrument(s) + drum) is virtually universal, and is probably one typical style of Afghanistan.

In terms of its musical function in the ensemble, the *harmonia* plays the main melody. Generally it repeats the main melody line of the song mimically or decoratively and sometimes it plays the main melody in place of the song.

Among keyed instruments like the *harmonia*, the *piano* and the *organ* are, in one sense, instruments for harmonic music. Though it is easy to imagine "harmony"

Table 2. Ensemble including *Harmonia*

Instruments	Place	Date
Harmonia, Rubab, Dohl	Kabul	11. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Dambura, Dohl	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Zerbaghali, Tsang	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Zerbaghali	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Ghichak, Zerbaghali	Kunduz	05. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tambur, Rubab, Dilruba, Dohl	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Tabla	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tambur, Rubab, Tabla	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973

from the name of the instrument and from the shape which includes a keyboard, the instrument is used in Afghanistan to play monophonic melody as there is no harmonic function like the Tonic, Dominant or Subdominant in western music. The movement of tones is characterized by a rapid and delicate ornament between melodic frames, and this unique technique cannot be imitated by singing or by other instruments.

The *harmonia* is also used as the standard pitch in an instrumental ensemble, for the pitch warps less than other pipes or string instruments and it is easy to produce sound only by pushing the keyboard.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

In every technical aspect the *harmonia* of Afghanistan resembles the *harmonium* of India, despite a difference of function. In Indian folk music, the *harmonium* is generally used to play the main melody, however, it is often used as the drone instrument in classical art music. Like other instruments mentioned below, the *harmonia* appears to be derived from North India, although its origin and diffusion remain to be clarified.

2. Tula

(1) NAME

In Afghanistan there are several types of small wind instruments, and every type of flute or pipe, whether wooden or metal, is called *tula*.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

Whether vertical or horizontal it is a wooden or metal pipe with a length of some 35 cm, and a diameter of about 2 cm, and with 6 finger holes. It has no reeds. A wooden flute in Mazarisharif was tighten at both ends with metal rings for reinforcement.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

Because it is the pipe of small size, the pitch is high. With a strong breath, players are apt to produce very sharp sounds in high range, particularly when using a metal pipe.

(4) PLAYER

All of the players in the 3 examples seen in the field were professional (Table 3).

Table 3. *Tula* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date
Tajik	35	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973
Pashtun	40	professional	Balkh	09. 8. 1973
Tajik	22	professional	Herat	01. 9. 1973

Table 4. Ensemble including *Tula*

Instruments	Place	Date
Tula, Zerbaghali	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973
Tula (solo)	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973
Tula (solo)	Balkh	09. 8. 1973
Tula (solo)	Herat	01. 9. 1973

Among them a Pashtun street performer from Balkh, used the *tula* to skillfully mimick the sounds of various animals and the crying of a human baby. The *tula*, which is popular among the Pashtuns and the Tajiks, and is easy both to make and play, seems to be widely distributed.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

It is chiefly played as the solo instrument (Table 4) and if played in an ensemble is accompanied by the drum. Functionally it is considered as a solo instrument taking charge of the melody line.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

This type of the flute or the pipe with a simple structure is widely distributed. Its only resemblance appears to be the flute called *tullal* in Germany [SACHS 1964: 401].

3. Nai

(1) NAME

It is also called *shashband*, which means "6 sections".

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

According to the single example found during field research in Kabul, it is a long, thin bamboo pipe with an overall length of 72 cm, and a diameter of 2 cm. As indicated by its other name, this pipe has 6 joints. Five finger holes were bored between the third and sixth joint from the top. The mouthpiece, with no reed, was cut diagonal to the player, and the round was enforced by something like the belt.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

The tube is long and its structure is rather simple, therefore it is not easy to produce a sound. The player holds the pipe at a slight angle, not only because the instrument is long, but also to produce various delicate timbres. The player takes the mouthpiece between his teeth and then breathes into it, controlling the air flow with his tongue. The unique timbre of the *nai* is produced by a combination of breathing and utterance made with a low voice as the player blows into the instrument.

(4) PLAYER

In the only example found, the player was a nomadic Hazara from the Kochi, who had worked in a hotel.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

The *nai* may be a melody-blowing instrument for solos.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

This type of pipe is widespread not only in the Islamic realm west of Afghanistan; i.e. the *ney* of Iran and Turkey and *kasbah* in north-west Africa, for example, but also in Rumania (*nai*). Systematically, the Japanese *shakuhachi* might be regarded as the same kind of instrument, although the shape and the placement of cut end of the mouthpiece are different.

4. Others

On July 17, 1973, during the course of our fieldwork, the imperial rule of Afghanistan was overthrown in a coup d'état and was replaced by a republican form of government. But for this event, an example of the *surnai* (*sornai*), an oboe-type, double-reeded pipe, could have been observed at the Independence Day Festival, in August. According to Hoerbürger, this is a popular instrument said to be played in an ensemble with the *dohl* (a kind of drum, see below) [HOERBURGER 1969: 17-19]. This type of pipe, with double reed and a trumpet-shaped end is one of the most widespread of instruments, and is used, for example, in north Africa (*mizmar* or *zamr*), Iran and Turkey (*zurna*), India (*shanai*, *nagaswaram*), China (*sona*), and Korea (*taepyong-so*).

III. CHORDOPHONES

1. Rubab

(1) NAME

This instrument is also known as the *robab*, a pronunciation adopted by some scholars [HOERBURGER 1969], but the sound of the first vowel is obscure, and individual differences are recognizable.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

The shape and structure of this instrument is rather complicated: A boat-shaped body with its center deeply constricted from both sides, and a thick, short neck are made from a single hollowed log. A peg box is attached to the end of the neck from the lower part of the body to the upper, constricted part. A sheep skin, pasted to the body, is stretched to form a sound box. A wooden board is applied from the upper half of the body to the neck, as a finger board. Three or four movable frets, wound by gut strings, are set at the neck part. The example seen in Jalalabad

was 91 cm long, 19 cm wide on the body surface, and 24 cm deep at the boat-shaped part of body. Five or six main strings are stretched, and according to the number of main strings, wooden pegs are inserted in the peg box from right and left.

The main strings are made of thick gut or nylon and the others are metal strings, that are stretched from the lower part of the body, through the wooden bridge set on the sheep skin, to the pegs. From ten to thirteen thin, resonant strings are stretched through the hole in the center of the bridge and in the column on the wooden board to the pegs, inserted into the body from the side.

To produce a more sonorous sound, some *rubabs* have several tiny holes in the sheep skin or ivory decorations on the wooden board on the side of the body.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

The instrument is held sideways, and its body supported on the player's right knee as he uses either a bone or a plastic plectrum, held in his right hand, to pluck the strings. A large, deep, quiet sound is produced.

(4) PLAYER

In addition to some Tajik and many Pashtu professional musicians, players of this instrument have a wide regional distribution (Table 5).

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

The *rubab* is mainly a fundamental instrument in any formation; singing, *harmonia*, string instrument and drum—(sometimes *harmonia* is omitted). The *rubab* is always accompanied by a drum (Table 6). When a duet is played with a drum, the *rubab* is a solo instrument which plays the melody part, whereas in an ensemble it plays a medium part of the melody.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

Folkmusical instruments, the *rabab* of Kashmir and that of the Punjab resemble the Afghan *rubab* both in shape and structure [KRISHNASWAMI 1971: 33]. According to Sachs, *rubabs* in Kashmir are known as "*saradiya vina*" [SACHS 1923: 122]. Although the *sarod* of Indian classical music also looks like the *rubab*, it is different in that it has, among other features, a metal, unfretted finger board and all metal

Table 5. *Rubab* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date	Remarks
Pashtun	33	professional	Kabul	11. 7. 1973	Dambura
Tajik	43	shopkeeper	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973	
Tajik	40	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973	
Pashtun	30	professional	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973	
Pashtun	30	professional	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973	
Pashtun	32	professional	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973	

Table 6. Ensemble including *Rubab*

Instruments	Place	Date
Rubab, Dohl	Kabul	11. 7. 1973
Harmonia, Rubab, Dohl	Kabul	11. 7. 1973
Rubab, Zerbaghali	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Rubab, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Zerbaghali	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tambur, Rubab, Dilruba, Dohl	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Tabla	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tambur, Rubab, Tabla	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973

strings. Although the names of the Indonesian *rebab* and the Arabic *rabab* closely resemble the Afghan *rubab*, both are rubbed string-instruments belonging to the same family as the fiddle.

2. Tambur

(1) NAME

Nothing to note.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

The *tambur* has a long neck as opposed to the short one of the *rubab*. It consists of a slender neck with a peg for resonant strings and of wooden, resonating body shaped like a half-pear. The length of the instrument is not always proportionate to the width of the body.

The *tambur* has 24–26 movable frets wound by guts on the neck, where instead of the peg box there are six tuning pegs, three from the front and three from the side, for the playing strings. There are many small holes on the face of the body, to obtain a finer sound. The main playing strings, which may number either 2–3 or 5–6, according to the player's choice or depending on the occasion, are made of thick metal. From eleven to fourteen fine, metallic, resonant strings are stretched along the side of the neck.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

A player sits cross-legged and sets the body of the instrument with the neck aslant, on his right leg. When he plays at the high position (held on a lower part of the neck), the instrument is kept vertical but playing at the low position, a rarely used technique (the head of the neck is held), the instrument is layed flat. A sonorous, metallic sound is brought forth by plucking the strings with a wire, pyramidal plectrum, worn on the right index finger. By using freely various techniques a good player of this instrument exhibits a brilliant virtuosity which cannot be rivalled by other musical instruments.

Table 7. *Tambur* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date
Tajik	40	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973
Uzbek	40	druggist	Mazar-i-Sharif	09. 8. 1973
Tajik	70	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
Tajik	35	professional, shopkeeper	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
Pashtun	40	professional	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973
Tajik	37	teahouse master	Herat	02. 9. 1973

Table 8. Ensemble including *Tambur*

Instruments	Place	Date
(song), Tambur, Zerbaghali	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973
(song), Tambur, Zerbaghali	Mazar-i-Sharif	09. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tambur, Rubab, Dilruba, Dohl	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
Tambur, Dohl	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
(song), Tambur, Tabla	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tambur, Rubab, Tabla	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973
(song), Tambur, Dotar, Zerbaghali	Herat	02. 9. 1973

(4) PLAYER

Players of this instrument are older than those of other instruments (Table 7). Except for the example of 35 years old Tajik tailor-musician, in Mazar-i-Sharif, most professional *tambur* players are more than 40 years of age. It can be assumed from this that a *tambur* player must train himself for many years, as the playing of this instrument requires a high level of technique. Most *tambur* players are Tajiks and Pashtuns. The former are mainly located in the northern and western parts of their tribal area, but the Pashtuns in the central southern part.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

This instrument is used in various ensemble formations (Table 8). It always plays the main melody line and, like the *rubab*, must be accompanied by the drum.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

In name and shape the *tambur* of Afghanistan resembles the *tambura* of North India although their functions are quite different. The Indian *tambura* is an unfretted drone instrument, with no resonant strings. The Turkish *tambura* and the Iranian *tambur-buzurk* are also long-necked, plucked instruments, but they two lack resonant strings, although they have the same appearance as the *tambur* in Afghanistan [JANATA 1975: 159-160], which, it should be noted, possesses resonant strings.

3. Dotar

(1) NAME

Dotar, also called *dutar*, means “two strings”.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

The *dotar* is a long-necked, plucked instrument with resonant strings, like the *tambur*, but smaller. The largest example, observed in Herat, was 134 cm long, and both the width and depth of the half-pear-shaped resonating body was 20 cm. The body is made from a hollowed mulberry tree, and the face covered with a thin veneer of gooseberry wood. Though the neck of the *tambur* has a uniform thickness from top to bottom, that of the *dotar*, with 10–19 gut or wire frets, tapers toward the end. In addition to the 1–3 metal playing strings, contrary to its name, “two strings”, the *dotar* has 10–13 resonant strings made of thin metal. Four tuning pegs for the playing strings are inserted, 2 from the front and the remainder from the side, into the end of the neck and the tuning pegs for resonant strings are arranged in a line on the side of the neck.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

The position of a player is almost same as for the *tambur*, but he sets the instrument closer to the horizontal. Metallic and unreverberative sounds are produced by plucking the strings with a plectrum of the same type, but somewhat smaller, than that used for the *tambur*.

(4) PLAYER

The two *dotar* players studied during field research were both Tajiks, and amateur players in Herat, western Afghanistan (Table 9).

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

The *dotar* is a melody-playing instrument that is accompanied by a drum. It is

Table 9. *Dotar* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date
Tajik	30	shopkeeper	Herat	01. 9. 1973
Tajik	20	teahouse waiter	Herat	02. 9. 1973

Table 10. Ensemble including *Dotar*

Instruments	Place	Date
(song), Dotar, Zerbaghali, Tal	Herat	01. 9. 1973
(song), Tambur, Dotar, Zerbaghali	Herat	02. 9. 1973

noteworthy that there is an ensemble with the *tambur* which also has the same function as the *dotar* (Table 10).

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

The Iranian *setar* ("three strings") resembles the *dotar* in shape and name, but it has no resonant strings. The *dutar* in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, seems to be of the same origin.

4. Panjtar

(1) NAME

The name means "5 strings".

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

This instrument is 131 cm long, long-necked, wooden and closely resembles the *dotar*, except that it has no resonant strings. The width of the resonating body's face is 20 cm, the depth 17 cm, and the neck, with 17 movable frets made of gut, tapers forward the end. In spite of its name, the *panjtar* actually has 4 metal strings stretched to the tuning pegs, 2 of which are inserted from the front, and 2 from the side.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

Both execution and timbre are almost the same as for the *dotar*.

(4) PLAYER

Only one example was studied during field research. The player was a 35 year-old Tajik professional musician, a strolling player who plays in various parts of the country. He plays accompanied on the *zerbaghali* by his 9-year-old son, who also sings professionally.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

This instrument plays the main melody accompanied by the *zerbaghali*.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

In shape, structure, name and other features, the *panjtar* closely resembles the Iranian *setar* although some *setars* reportedly have gut in addition to metal strings [SACHS 1964: 348].

5. Dambura

(1) NAME

Etymologically there may be a relationship with the *tambur*, but the present-day instruments are significantly different.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

A long-necked wooden instrument examined in Kunduz was 120.5 cm long. The

width of the half-pear-shaped face of the resonating body was 27 cm and the depth 19 cm. The thickness of the unfretted neck is almost uniform. Two nylon strings are stretched along the neck. Tuning pegs are inserted at the end of the neck. In some instruments the strings and the neck are tightened with thread to adjust the effective length of the strings.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

The position of the player and the manner in which the instrument is held are almost same as for the *dotar* and the *panjtar*. But the execution is different. The *dambura* is plucked with the fingers of the right hand (the index, the middle, the ring finger are mainly used), without a plectrum. Unreverberative, soft sound is appreciated. Sometimes the fingers of the right hand pat the face of the body to produce an interlude. Because the instrument has no fret the fingers of the left hand can slide freely along the finger board, holding down the strings together. Parallel chordal movements are often expressed in this way.

(4) PLAYER

The few examples observed show that players are Northern Tajik amateurs (Table 11). The single Hazara example is noteworthy when the relationship with Central Asia is considered.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

Like other chordophones, the fundamental ensemble of the *dambura*, the main

Table 11. *Dambura* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date	Remarks
Hazara	40	hotel employee	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973	
Tajik	16	barber	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973	song, Harmonia
Tajik	20	barber	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973	song, Dohl
Tajik	43	shopkeeper	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973	Rubab

Table 12. Ensemble including *Dambura*

Instruments	Place	Date
Dambura, Zerbaghali	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Dambura, Dohl	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Dambura, Dohl	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
(song), Dambura, Zerbaghali	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Ghichak, Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973

melody-playing instrument, is with a drum. Sometimes a *harmonia* or a *tal* may be added (Table 12).

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

This instrument resembles the *domra* of Kazakhstan in shape and structure, which might indicate a Central Asian origin.

6. Ghichak

(1) NAME

The pronunciation of the “gh” is close to the French “r” so it can be pronounced also as “richak” or “khichak”.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

Various types of instruments have a resonating body penetrated by a neck. Three examples recorded during field research used a tin can as a body, but that observed in Kabul had a tambourine-type body of goat skin stretched on a round, wooden frame. A wooden or bamboo bow, almost 50 cm in length, and with horse hair strings, is used to bow this instrument. The overall length of the three examples, the performance of which was also recorded, was 72–76 cm. Two metal strings and two tuning pegs are inserted into each side of the peg box, which was made by boring a hole at the end of the stick-typed unfretted neck. A square tin-can, somewhat like 4 liter oil can, is used as the resonating box, without any artifices, and the mouth of the can was left open. There are also boxes with many orifices for the passage of air.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

A player sits on the floor cross-legged and holds the instrument in an almost

Table 13. *Ghichak* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date	Remarks
Tajik	50	barber	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973	
Tajik	38	shopkeeper	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973	song, Harmonia
Tajik	30	barber	Kunduz	05. 8. 1973	song

Table 14. Ensemble including *Ghichak*

Instruments	Place	Date
(song), Ghichak, Zerbaghali, Tal	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973
(song), Ghichak, Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Ghichak, Zerbaghali	Kunduz	05. 8. 1973

vertical position. The instrument is held in the left hand and bowed with the right. A metallic sound results, however, if the body is made of wood covered with animal skin and the strings are of gut, a quite different timbre is produced.

(4) **PLAYER**

All are Northern Tajik amateurs (Table 13), and a relationship with Central Asia may be presumed.

(5) **FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION**

As this instrument plays the main melody, the fundamental ensemble is with a drum. Sometimes a *harmonia* or a *tal* will be added (Table 14).

(6) **RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS**

Instruments belonging to the same family, such as the *kokyū* of Japan, the *saw u* or the *saw sam sai* of Thailand, *rebabs* of peninsular Malaysia or Indonesia, the Arabian *rabab*, the *kamanche* of Iran or Turkey are widespread. From its name, however, the origin of the *ghichak* is traceable to a Central Asian region such as the *kiyak* of the Kirghiz.

7. Others

Some Indian instruments are used in Afghan music. The field survey revealed that the *dilruba*, the *sarinda*, the *sarangi*, and the *tambura* (or *sitar* in Afghanistan) were used in a Pashtu professional band, and they were recognized in Kabul. Judging from a radio broadcast, these instruments seem to be mainly used in the band attached to the radio station. This was a band of elite, city musicians who used these instruments to produce music not for the general public but rather for an urban intelligentsia.

According to Janata, there exists in Nuristan the *waj*, a vertical-arched harp with the resonant box [JANATA 1975: 172]. The example in the Kabul museum shows that the 4-string bow is attached to the resonant box through the animal skin that is stretched over it.

IV. MEMBRANOPHONES

1. Zerbaghali

(1) **NAME**

The name means "armpit". The instrument is so called because the instrument is held under the arm as it is played.

(2) **SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE**

The instrument is a goblet-shaped pottery drum with goat or deer skin stretched across the top or wider part. The narrower end is left open to let out the air vibration

transmitted from the opposite end. The diameter of the large end is 20–23 cm, the inside diameter of the narrower end about 8 cm and the overall length 25–45 cm.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

Holding the *zerbaghali* under the left arm, a player, sitting cross-legged, rests the body of the instrument on his left thigh with the drumhead forward, and beats it alternately with the inner surface of the fingers of both hands. Sometimes he rubs the edge of the drumhead or closes the narrower end with the left hand to produce a variation in timbre. The pitch or the timbre generally differs according to the size of the body or of the drumhead. Nevertheless, a rather shrill or dry timbre is produced.

Table 15. *Zerbaghali* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date	Remarks
Tajik	18	student	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973	
Tajik	10	barber	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973	song
Tajik	9	professional	Kunduz	28. 7. 1973	song
Tajik	15	shop employee	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973	
Tajik	20	barber	Kunduz	05. 8. 1973	
Uzbek	45	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973	
Uzbek	unknown	druggist	Mazar-i-Sharif	09. 8. 1973	
Tajik	19	student	Herat	01. 9. 1973	
Tajik	38	teahouse master	Herat	02. 9. 1973	

Table 16. Ensemble including *Zerbaghali*

Instruments	Place	Date
Dambura, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Dambura, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
(song), Ghichak, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973
(song), Dambura, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973
(song), Panjtar, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Kunduz	28. 7. 1973
(song), Ghichak, Dambura, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Rubab, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Dambura, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Dambura, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Ghichak, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Kunduz	05. 8. 1973
(song), Tambur, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973
Tula, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Mazar-i-Sharif	08. 8. 1973
(song), Tambur, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Mazar-i-Sharif	09. 8. 1973
(song), Dotar, <i>Zerbaghali</i> , Tal	Herat	01. 9. 1973
(song), Tambur, Dotar, <i>Zerbaghali</i>	Herat	02. 9. 1973

(4) PLAYER

As is clear from Table 15, apart from two Uzbek musicians, many amateur players are Tajiks. There are few professional *zerbaghali* players.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

Like the *tal* (*tsang*), the *zerbaghali* is often used as an accompaniment to provide the rhythm for string instruments. Although there are various ensemble formations, a string instrument is always included (Table 16). The *tal* is commonly included in such ensembles, whereas the *harmonia* is seldom used in frequency.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

Such a one-headed drum has a relatively broad geographic distribution. Examples include the *dombak* of Iran, the *darbuka* (*darabuka*) of Turkey and Arabia, the *tumbaknari* of Kashmir, the *thon* of Thailand and the *gendang* of Peninsular Malaysia.

2. Dohl

(1) NAME

Nothing to note.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

This is a double-headed, barrel-shaped, wooden drum, the heads of which are attached to the cylinder by cords. One examined at Bamyan had goat-skin heads, tightened by cords that passed through both faces. The overall length of the example studied was 47 cm, with a drumhead diameter of 22 cm.

Table 17. *Dohl* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date
Pashtun	35	professional	Kabul	11. 7. 1973
Tajik	20	barber	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Pashtun	35	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973

Table 18. Ensemble including *Dohl*

Instruments	Place	Date
Harmonia, Rubab, Dohl	Kabul	11. 7. 1973
Rubab, Dohl	Kabul	11. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Dambura, Dohl	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Dambura, Dohl	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Tambur, Dohl	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tumbur, Rubab, Dohl	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

Sitting cross-legged on the floor, a player rests the drum on his thighs and beats the rim of the head to produce a rather high sound. A thick and heavy sound is produced by the beating with the left palm. The timbre of it is thicker than that of the *zerbaghali*. Sometimes the *dohl* is played with a stick while the instrument is suspended from the shoulder of a walking player.

(4) PLAYER

Three examples are shown in Table 17. Unlike the *zerbaghali*, there were two Pashtu professional *dohl* players.

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

This is a rhythm-playing instrument used as the accompaniment in an ensemble that includes string instruments. The *harmonia* is often used in such an ensemble.

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

Such barrel-shaped, two-headed drums have a worldwide distribution. Among them the Indian *dohl* used in folk music resembles that of Afghanistan.

3. Others

The most popular drum of North India, the *tabla*, is also played in Afghanistan. This really consists of two drums, the smaller being the *tabla* and the other, the *baya*. Field research showed that all players of this instrument were professional and elite musicians in big cities. Most were Pashtuns (Table 19). In addition to being used as in the ensemble (Table 20), it may also be used in various formations of the Indian instrumental ensemble.

Table 19. *Tabla* Player

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date
Pashtun	28	professional	Kunduz	06. 8. 1973
Tajik	25	professional	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
Pashtun	30	professional	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973
Pashtun	45	professional	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973

Table 20. Ensemble including *Tabla*

Instruments	Place	Date
Tambur, Tabla	Mazar-i-Sharif	10. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Tabla	Jalalabad	20. 8. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Tambur, Rubab, Tabla	Kandahar	29. 8. 1973

Two examples of the *daira*, a one-headed drum like a large tambourine, were examined during the survey. One was used as the accompaniment for a childrens' dance at a kindergarten in Kabul, and the other was played at a family concert as the accompaniment for folk songs. Drums of this type are widespread in India (*duff* or *khanjari*) and throughout West Asia (the *deff* or *duff* in Iran and Turkey, and the *bendir* in Iraq, for example). The name indicates that the Afghan *daira* may have originated in Central Asia, like the *dojra* of the Kirghiz.

V. IDIOPHONES

1. Tal

(1) NAME

This instrument is also called the *tsang*.

(2) SHAPE/MATERIAL/STRUCTURE

There are 2 types of *tal* or *tsang*. The more popular is small cymbals made of thick brass, the diameter of which is 5–6 cm. The other, observed in Herat, was a leather anklet with many brass bells, used by a female dancer.

(3) EXECUTION/TIMBRE

Grasping the braids of small cymbals with the fingers of both hands, a player clangs the instruments by clapping to produce a very high, reverberative, clear sound.

Table 21. *Tal (Tsang) Player*

Ethnic Group	Age	Occupation	Place	Date
Hazara	22	hotel employee	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Tajik	15	barber	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973
Tajik	20	shop employee	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
Tajik	35	shopkeeper	Herat	01. 9. 1973

Table 22. Ensemble including *Tal (Tsang)*

Instruments	Place	Date
Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Bamyan	23. 7. 1973
Ghichak, Zerbaghali, Tal	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973
Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Kunduz	26. 7. 1973
(song), Harmonia, Rubab, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Ghichak, Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Rubab, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Dambura, Zerbaghali, Tal	Faizabad	30. 7. 1973
(song), Dotar, Zerbaghali, Tal	Herat	01. 9. 1973

The leather belts with brass bells are held with both hands and are played by striking them on the floor.

(4) PLAYER

Players are Tajik amateurs in northern and western Afghanistan (Table 21).

(5) FORMATION OF ENSEMBLE/FUNCTION

This is the rhythm playing instrument, chiefly played at stressed beats, used in the ensemble of the string instrument and the *zerbaghali* (Table 22).

(6) RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AREAS

Thick, small cymbals like the *ching chap* of Thailand are recognized in Southeast Asia. But, from the name, the *tal* of Afghanistan is similar to the *tal (talam)* of South India. The version having brass bells on leather belts resembles the *tatkar* anklets used in Indian dances.

2. Others

Except for the *tal*, idiophones are rare in Afghanistan. There is a metal Jew's-harp, *chang* [HOERBURGER 1969: 22], of which there is said to be two types, one semi-circular and the other a slender, stick type. But the only example observed during field research, in Kabul, was the stick type, that was sold to tourists. No performance was observed; players and other technical details are unknown. Judging from the name and the materials from which it is constructed, this instrument may be closely related to the *munchang* of Kashmir or the *morchang* of Rajasthan (India). This instrument probably originated in India, although so-called *Jew's harps* are widespread throughout the world.

VI. CONCLUSION

1. Ethnic Group and Occupation of Players

The 57 players of Afghan instruments studied during the course of research are arranged by ethnic affiliation in Table 23. Thirty-four players are Tajiks, the majority, who possess four kinds of string instruments, the *dotar*, *panjtar*, *dambura*, and the *ghichak*, plus the *zerbaghali* and the *tal*. None of these instruments are found among the Pashtuns, largely because almost all of them are played by amateurs (Tables 9, 11, 13, 15, 21). These instruments are mainly distributed among the Tajiks in northern and western Afghanistan. But the *harmonia*, *dohl*, *rubab*, and the *tabla* (especially the last two) tend to be more favored by the Pashtuns rather than the Tajiks. The limited size of the sample, however, does not permit the conclusion that these instruments are played mainly among the Pashtuns.

Players' occupations are given in Table 24. The Pashtuns, clearly the musicians of Afghanistan, are all professionals, whereas only 10 of the 34 Tajiks in the sample

Table 23. Number of Players by the Ethnic Group

	Tajik	Pashtun	Hazara	Uzbek	Total
Harmonia	5	6			11
Tula	2	1			3
Nai			1		1
Rubab	2	4			6
Tambur	4	1		1	6
Dotar	2				2
Panjtar	1				1
Dambura	3		1		4
Ghichak	3				3
Zerbaghali	7			2	9
Dohl	1	2			3
Tabla	1	3			4
Tal (Tsang)	3		1		4
Total	34	17	3	3	57

Table 24. Number of Players by the Occupation

	Tajik	Pashtun	Hazara	Uzbek	Total
professional	10	17		1	28
barber	10				10
teahouse master or waiter	3				3
druggist				2	2
shopkeeper or shop employee	8				8
hotel employee			3		3
student	3				3
Total	34	17	3	3	57

are professionals. Each main occupation of amateur musicians is defined according to ethnic group, which suggests a correspondence between membership in a particular ethnic group and a certain occupation.

2. Formation of Ensemble

The formation of each ensemble surveyed is given in Table 25, and they are arranged collectively in Table 26. The most popular ensemble formation in Afghanistan is clearly a string instrument with a drum (or a *tal*). Next is the combination of a *harmonia*, a string instrument and a drum (or a *tal*). Singing is generally added to the instrumental ensemble.

3. Relationships among adjacent musical cultures

Table 27 attempts to compare those Afghan instruments reported here which

Table 25. Formation of Ensemble (1)

	(song)	Harmonia	Tula	Nai	Rubab	Tambur	Dotar	Panjtar	Dambura	Ghichak	Zerbaghali	Dohl	Tabla	(Tal)
Tajik	○							○			○ ○			○
Tajik	○	○			○								○	
Tajik	○								○			○		
Tajik	○	○ ○												
Tajik	○				○									○
Tajik	○						○ ○							○
Tajik	○								○ ○					○
Tajik	○													○
Tajik	○													○ ○ ○ ○
Tajik	○									○ ○				
Tajik	○													
Tajik, Hazara														
Tajik, Uzbek	○													
Tajik, Uzbek	○													
Tajik, Uzbek	○		○											
Pashtun	○	○			○							○ ○		
Pashtun	○	○			○								○ ○	
Pashtun	○	○			○									
Pashtun	○	○			○									

Note: (song) and (Tal) indicate that they are sometimes omitted.

Table 26. Formation of Ensemble (2)

	flute/pipe + drum	1
	string instrument + drum + Tal	1
(song) +	string instrument + drum + (Tal)	12
(song) + Harmonia +	string instrument + drum + (Tal)	7

Note: (song) and (Tal) indicate that they are sometimes omitted.

appear to have something in common with those of the adjacent areas of eastern India (Hindustani and Karnataka musical culture) and western Iran (Persian musical culture). Relationships with other areas for every aspect of an instrument have been collectively arranged, with special reference to India and Iran.

As previously noted, *sur nai*-type instruments of the aerophone group have a wide distribution, centering on Asia and extending to North Africa. *Zerbaghali*-type instruments of the membranophone group, although widespread, are less extensively distributed than the *sur nai*. Because these two instruments are so widely distributed it is not possible to conclude definitely which music area had the greatest influence on the Afghan *sur nai* and *zerbaghali*. The other instruments in Afghanistan appear to have some connections with either the Eastern (Indian) or the Western (Persian) music culture area.

Table 27. Relationships among Adjacent Cultures

Iran	Name	Shape	Structure	Afghanistan	Name	Shape	Structure	India
				Harmonia	○	○	○	Harmonium
Ney (Nai)	○	○	○	Nai				
Zurna	○	○	○	Surnai	○	○	○	Shanai
				Rubab	○	○	○	Rabab
Tambur-buzurk	○	○	×	Tambur	○	×	×	Tambura
Setar	○	○	×	*Dotar				
Setar	○	○	○	Panjtar				
Setar	×	○	×	*Dambura				
Kamanche	×	○	○	*Ghichak				
				Dilruba	○	○	○	Dilruba
				Sarangi	○	○	○	Sarangi
				Sarinda	○	○	○	Sarinda
				Sitar	×	○	○	Tambura
Dombak	×	○	○	Zerbaghali	×	○	○	Tumbaknari
				Dohl	○	○	○	Dohl
				Tabla	○	○	○	Tabla
Deff (Duff)	×	○	○	*Daira				
				Tal (Tsang)	○	○	○	Tal (Talam)
				Chang	○	○	○	Morchang

Note: ○—same or similar in some points
 ×—totally different

The *harmonia* among the aerophones, the *rubab*, the *dilruba*, the *sarangi*, the *sarinda* and the *sitar* of the chordophone group, the *dohl*, the *tabla* among the membranophones, together with the *tal* (*tsang*) and the *chang* of the idiophone group appear to be closely related with similar instruments in India. It is noteworthy that these Indian instruments are little different in name, shape and structure, apart from the Indian *tambura*, known in Afghanistan as the *sitar*. Moreover, all the popular instruments of Afghanistan, the *harmonia*, the *rubab*, the *dohl*, the *tabla* and the *tal* (*tsang*), are, without exception, related to those of India.

The instruments showing a close relationship with those of Iran (Persian musical culture) are the *nai*, an aerophone, the *tambur*, the *dotar*, the *panjtar*, the *dambura*, the *ghichak*, among the chordophones, and the *daira* of the membranophone group. Among these the *tambur*, the *dotar*, the *dambura*, the *ghichak* and others are relatively popular in Afghanistan, but are quite different from their Iranian counterparts in name and structure. This is not the case with those instruments having an immediate connection with India.

In Table 27 the names of those instruments marked with an asterisk (i.e. *dotar*, *dambura*, *ghichak* and *daira*) have a closer relationship with Central Asia. The inadequate documentation of the music and musical instruments of Central Asia does not permit a definitive statement on the descent of these five instruments, but nevertheless it may safely be assumed that they are derived from Central Asia, as the players of these instruments (especially of the *dotar*, *dambura* and *ghichak*) surveyed in the research were mostly of Central Asian descent, and included the Tajiks and Hazaras (Tables 9, 11, 13).

To summarize, instruments of Indian descent are the most popular in Afghanistan, followed by those of Central Asia. For the most part, instruments of Iranian origin, such as the *tambur*, have not had a notable influence in Afghanistan. There is, then, a relationship between East and North in Afghan musical instruments. Generally, Afghanistan is said to stand at a crossroads of Oriental and Occidental civilizations but in terms of musical instruments it may well be said that they have a close kinship with those of the Northern and Eastern areas. In a sense, therefore, Afghanistan is also the crossroads of North and East.

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Photo. 1. *Harmonia* Player (Bamyan)

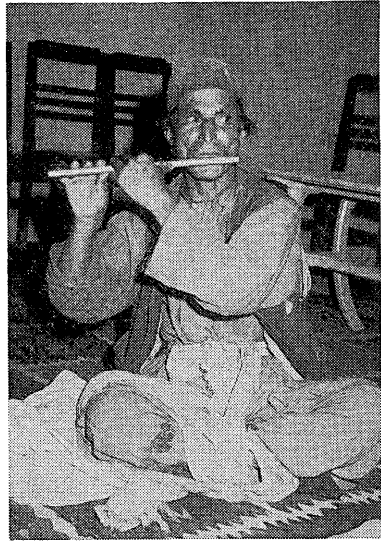


Photo. 2. *Tula* Player (Balkh)

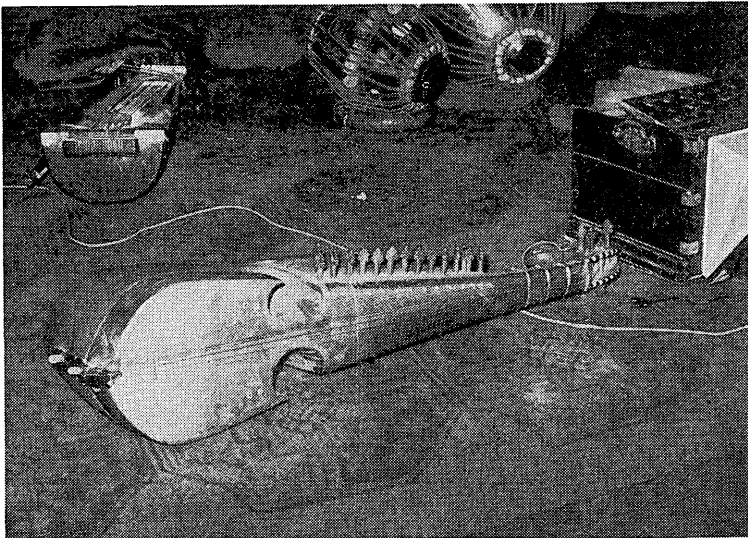


Photo. 4. *Rubab* (Kabul)



Photo. 3. *Nai* Player (Kabul)



Photo. 5. *Tambur* Player (Mazar-i-Sharif)



Photo. 6. *Panjtar* Player (Kunduz)



Photo. 7. *Ghichak* Player (Kunduz)



Photo. 8. *Zerbaghali* Player (Mazar-i-Sharif)



Photo. 9. *Dohl* Player (Kabul)



Photo. 10. *Tal (Tsang)* Player (Kunduz)

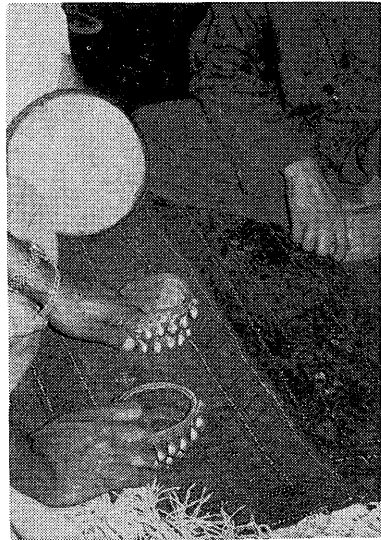


Photo. 11. A Version of *Tal (Tsang)* (Herat)