result - apart from the brief account in H. H. Wilson's *Ariana Antiqua* (London 1841) and the continuing debate over his most spectacular find, the Bimaran casket - the archaeological value of his work as the first explorer and recorder of the ancient sites in the neighbourhood of Kabul and Jalalabad has been largely ignored ever since.

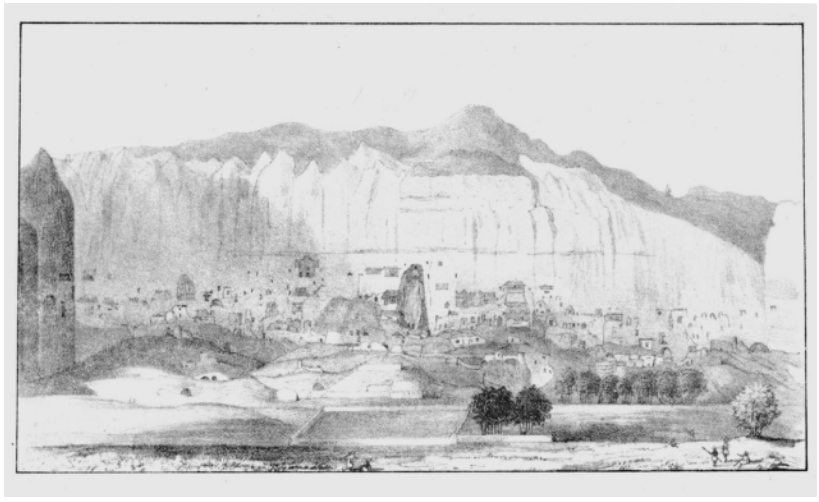
However, Masson left detailed, illustrated records of his finds. Not only do some of his original labels survive with the objects themselves, but there are seven volumes of his manuscripts and two large bundles of his uncatalogued papers in the India Office Collections of the British Library. These records, together with his excavated finds, drawings, and maps, provide a unique record of many key sites in Afghanistan which have since been lost. One of his most important contributions was that he was the first to realise that the Greek names and titles on the obverse of the coins were repeated on the reverse in Kharoshthi, thus leading to the decipherment of this previously unknown local script. In a period when numismatic interest in these regions concentrated on gold and silver coins, he recognized that the copper coinage was much more important for purposes of historical research. His detailed approach - largely unappreciated by his contemporaries - was far ahead of his time.

The Masson Project evolved in 1993 from the realization that his comprehensive archive could be used to identify and document the finds from his collection now in the British Museum's Department of Oriental Antiquities and Department of Coins and Medals. It has been generously funded since its inception by the Kreitman Foundation and, since 1998, by the Townley Group of British Museum Friends. The Project is attempting to redress the oversight of the last c. 160 years by studying Masson's manuscript records in the British Library in conjunction with his rich collection of Buddhist relic deposits, coins, rings, seals, and other small objects now in the British Museum. Work initially concentrated on producing a typed and illustrated record of all the surviving documentation. This has been of great use in helping to identify and catalogue the Masson material in the Department of Oriental Antiquities, particularly in reconstituting many of the finds from specific stupa relic deposits. With the help of Professor S. Kuwayama, the archive is now supplemented by copies of photographs from a 1960s survey of the sites, generously donated by Kyoto University, Japan, while copies of all Masson's original drawings are in the process of being obtained from the British Library. The archival record has further helped to identify many of Masson's coins in the Museum collection and has also given a site provenance to the other small finds.

Research has established that about 3,700 coins from Masson's collection were sold at auction in 1887 (some of these have subsequently also entered the British Museum collection), while in 1912 a further c. 600 were presented to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. In 1995, with the help of Neil Kreitman and Graham Shaw, about 10,000 coins, including the residue of Masson's vast collection, were discovered in storage at the former India Office Library and were transferred to the British Museum on permanent loan from the British Library. The majority of these coins are from specific excavated Buddhist stupa deposits or from Begram (the site correctly identified by Masson as the ancient city of Alexandria of the Caucasus, founded by Alexander the Great). These two groups of provenanced coins thus provide, on the one hand, unique evidence for the spread of Buddhism into these regions and, on the other, the means for reconstructing the general history of the region, as reflected by a single important city site.

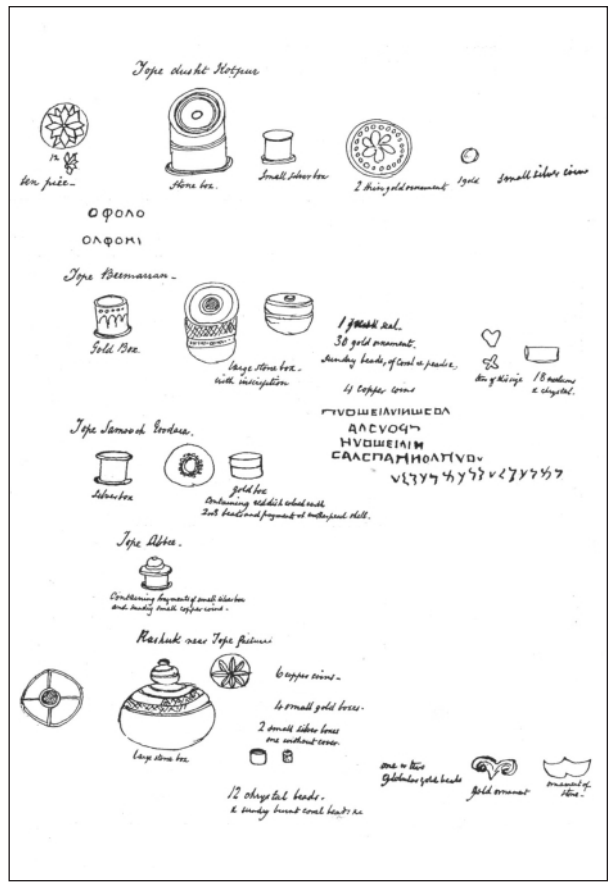
Research this past year has revealed that Masson could only have collected c. 47,000 coins, and not the c. 80,000, as he calculated. Of these, only c. 12,400 can be accounted for, but this total includes some 7,000 coins now in the British Museum. Work on conserving and recording the British Library India Loan Collection is ongoing: 6126 coins in this collection have now been identified as probable Masson coins, and most have been cleaned, conserved, and sorted. The next step is to produce a database of all the material. An exhibition *Discovering Ancient Afghanistan: The Masson Collection*, displaying all these finds, is scheduled to open in Gallery 69a of the Museum on 11 September 2002: coincidentally, a date that is now the anniversary of events not yet dreamed of when it was chosen in early 2001. <

Dr Elizabeth Errington *is currently a curator of South and Central Asian coins in the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum. Her interest in Charles Masson began while writing her PhD thesis (London University 1987) on surviving records of 19th-century archaeological discoveries in Gandhara.*
E-mail: EErrington@british-museum.ac.uk



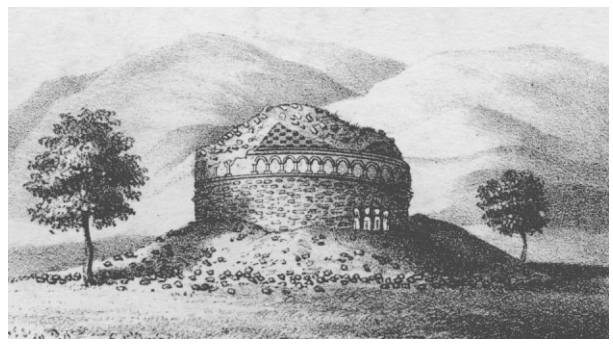
After C. Masson, Narrative of various journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan and the Panjab, London 1842, pl. facing p. 384.

Drawing by Charles Masson of the cave monasteries and smaller (38 m) Buddha of Bamiyan.



India Office Collections, Uncatalogued Masson Manuscripts, Bundle 1. Sketch reproduced courtesy of the British Library.

Charles Masson's sketch of his excavated finds from the relic deposits of the Buddhist stupas Kotpur 2, Bimaran 2, Gudara, Deh Rahman 1 ("Tope Abbee") and Passani tumulus 2 in the Darunta district, east of Jalalabad.



After H. H. Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua*, London 1841, Topes pl. III.

Charles Masson's sketch of the Buddhist stupa no. 2 at Bimaran, in the Darunta district, west of Jalalabad.

Travelogue of an Ethnomusicologist:

Living Musical Traditions of the Ismailis in Afghan Badakhshan

My research concentrates on the music and poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan, which resulted in research trips in 1992 and 1993 in Tajik Badakhshan,[1] in 1996 in Afghanistan, again in 1998 in Tajik Badakhshan, and in 2001 in Afghan Badakhshan.[2] Due to the harsh geographical and complicated political circumstances, Badakhshan has, until now, been an isolated area. What follows is a travelogue of my last trip to Afghan Badakhshan in August 2001.

Research > Afghanistan

By Jan van Belle

Preparing a trip to Afghan Badakhshan is a complicated affair requiring a lot of time, stamina, and especially patience. First, a Tajikistan visa from the Russian Embassy in London was needed, followed by another four weeks of waiting for the Tajikistan Foreign Ministry to authorize it. Once this visa was cleared, I was able to book my flight from Munich to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, where I had to wait yet another ten days to obtain my Tajik visa extension to Tajik Badakhshan (GBAO),and to apply for an Afghan visa with the Afghan Embassy. On top of this, that flights between Dushanbe and Khorog, the capital of Tajik Badakhshan, only run in clear weather resulted in another two days of waiting. On arrival in Khorog, I was lucky enough to get help from FOCUS, the Aga Khan humanitarian organization that arranges food supplies to the Afghan side. They provided me with helpful information and transportation to Tajik Eshkashim, a town in the South of Badakhshan, which, at that time, was the only place to cross the border. It is still controlled by the KGB, so I also needed a special permit from them; it makes one suspect that the authorities are doing their very best to discourage visits to this part of the world.

Once in Afghan Badakhshan, I could sleep in the FOCUS guesthouses in Afghan Eshkashim and in Baharak, where I was able to arrange an old Russian jeep, drivers, and a guide/translator for my trip. The FOCUS sticker on the jeep partly helped prevent constant harassment at the frequent checkpoints - or by prowling warlords in their Toyota jeeps - requiring additional travel documents issued by district governors or commanders.

Typical folk music ensemble

Osmund Bopearachchi, 1999.

Concepts of time, life and death

Travelling in Badakhshan is something to be endured. I would say that we owed our survival to the incredible skills of the driver, who steered the jeep, with its bald tires, with unfaltering good temper - and with total abandon - along narrow mountain roads and deep gorges. The roads are an unsurfaced carpet of bumps, full of pot-holes, stones, and relics from the civil war. At times, they were flooded with sand entering our lungs and covering our bodies and luggage with a thick layer of dust, not to mention penetrating seemingly every chink and cranny in the old jeep. Drivers in Afghanistan are invariably also trained mechanics with large supplies of spare parts and tools. Our old jeep, in fact, broke down several times, which required frequent repairs attended to with skill and improvisation from the driver and his helper. Indeed, they spent nearly as much time under the jeep as behind the steering wheel.

It was evident that, in this part of the world, the concepts of time, and of life and death, completely differ from our own, and

continued on page 10 >

continued from page 9 >

a researcher must learn to adapt. All in all, I spent roughly 80 per cent of my time either waiting or on the road, and could only commit 20 per cent to effective research and recording.

Worse than I had imagined

The purpose of my research was to compare Ismaili music in Afghanistan with the performance practice of Ismaili music in Tajik Badakhshan, where we had already completed extensive research.[3] When I arrived that August, the situation in the Rushan/Shughnan area was much the same, so I decided to cross the border in Eshkashim and to start research in the southern part of the province (see map), travelling from Eshkashim to Baharak and to Jorm, Hazrat Sayeed, and different villages in the Yumgan, Zibak, and Shughnan districts.

The situation of the musicians was even worse than I had imagined. Our Western concept of a professional musician was irrelevant in such a setting. Due to the low status of musicians in traditional Muslim countries, practically all of the singers of the *madâh* performance genre were living in poor conditions. Most of them worked as farmers, while some were lucky enough to find jobs. Most of them hadn't touched their instruments for a long time, being concerned only with their survival and that of their families. Many villages depended entirely on the FOCUS food supplies, mainly wheat and vegetable oil. Moreover, the warlords imposed bans on music under pressure from the Taliban. This is based on an interpretation of the Sharia (Islamic law) that considers music to be against public morals and arousing the lower passions, as I was informed by several warlords who stopped our jeep.

However, a transformation took place once musicians were gathered together, often joined by others from neighbouring villages, and after some rehearsal. In spite of their hopeless situation, they played their folk music (*musiqi watani*) with incredible enthusiasm and dedication. This got the audience involved, who reacted with dancing, clapping,whistling and shouts, and proved that music still is an integral part of their lives.

As my research focused both on religious as well as folk music, it soon appeared that, as regards religious music, the performance practice on the Afghan side was no different from that on the Tajik side. The musicians of the former played typical instruments like the Pamir *rubâb* (an unfretted long-necked, six-stringed plucked lute with protruding spurs), the *tanbûr* (a larger, unfretted, seven-stringed lute with an oval soundboard), and the *daf* (a circular frame drum). Likewise, they used the same performance-genre (*madâh*) and poetical genres like *ghazals, qasîda's, muxammas, munâjats,* and *du'âs*, and revered the same classical poets, especially Nasir-i Khusraw (AD 1004-approx. 1077), a major Ismaili scholar, writer, and poet, whose shrine (*mazar*) I visited in Hazrat Sayeed in the Yumgan district.

The difference between the performance practices of each side was the fact that twenty-two years of civil war and censorship of music had made a deep mark. Due to the lack of regular performances, texts often had to be sung from notebooks and musicians were not able to rehearse properly, or seemed to have forgotten parts of the performance genre. On the other hand, the *khalifas*, local religious representatives of the Agha Khan, and often musicians themselves, did their best to safeguard the traditions. In Eshkashim, I recorded children singing and learning *madâh*, guided by one of the fathers and the local *khalifa*.[4]

Folk music on the Afghan side of Badakhshan is, in some ways, different from the Tajik part, mainly in the use of instruments. Most typical for this area, and for the whole of northern Afghanistan and the Hazarajat, is the *dambura* (a two-stringed, unfretted, longnecked, plucked lute), an instrument seldomly found in Tajik Badakhshan, where the Pamir *rubâb* is mostly used. The harmonium (a portable reed organ with keyboard) is also quite common in Afghanistan, although seen less frequently in Badakhshan and imported from India, while, on the Tajik side, the accordion introduced by the Russian army, is very popular. Other instruments, like the *ghijak* (a spike-fiddle), *daf*, and *tablak* (a goblet drum) are widespread throughout both sides and typical for Badakhshan. Most folk music ensembles I recorded consisted of *dambura*, *ghijak*, and *daf* or *tablak*. One genre common to both sides is the *falak*, literally meaning "heaven" and, metaphorically, "fate"; the texts often deal with melancholy, yearning, alienation, separation, or unattainable love.

Unfortunately, the position of folk musicians was even more vulnerable than that of the performers of the more intimate religious music. This was because they used to play both at domestic festivities and in public places, like teahouses, or during local or national festivals. I was lucky enough to record some good amateur folk musicians in remote Ismaili villages, inaccessible to the jeeps of the warlords. One of them was the *gorgholi* singer and *dambura* player Rajab Moh., better known as Gorgholi Khan. I was surprised to find a performer of this epic genre, which originated in Turkmenistan, in Badakhshan. When I first met him, he refused to play. The reason he gave was that, due to the bad situation, he was not able to arrange dinner or lodging for us, things essential under his rules of hospitality. Fortunately, after some talking and a bundle of afghanis, he changed his mind and played the whole evening. That night I slept on the rooftop of his house under the magnificent star-spangled Badakhshan sky.

Only a few professional folk musicians and singers, like Dawlat Moh. Jawshan (Afghan *rubâb*), Dur Moh. Keshmi (*ghijak*) and, especially, Mehir Maftum (*dambura*) resisted the censorship of the authorities and endured the poor economic circumstances. They continued to perform in Badakhshan as much as possible. Recently, Mehir Maftum obtained (inter)national recognition as one of the winners of the 2001 Prince Claus Awards (€ 20,000). Unfortunately, he was in Pakistan during my trip, but steps have been taken to invite him for a concert tour through France and the Netherlands.

Recommendations

When I visited Afghan Badakhshan in August 2001, the tragic events of September 11 (the day I flew back to the Netherlands) were the last things I expected. Despite that it did accelerate the defeat of the fundamentalist Taliban government, for several reasons I was, and I still am, strongly opposed to the American attack on Afghanistan.

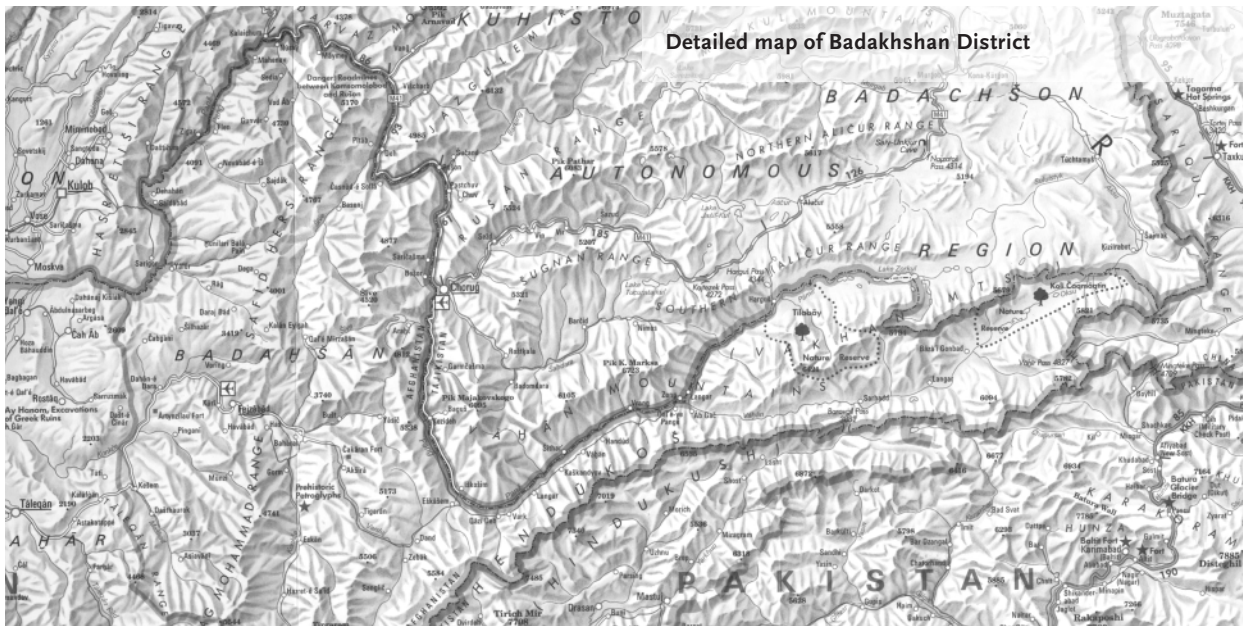
Furthermore, practically no attention was given by the international media to the hopeless situation of the performing arts in Afghanistan. After twenty-three years of civil war and censorship of music, BBC Radio 3 made a live recording on New Year's Day of a concert in Kabul given by the singer Aziz Ghaznawi and his ensemble, whom I recorded in Kabul in 1996, but in secret and in very poor conditions. Unfortunately, given the attitude of Afghan rulers towards music during the last twenty-three years, there is no reason for too much optimism, especially because one of the first steps of the new interim government was to maintain the Sharia. In this situation, what power do musicologists have in representing the music and in empowering the musicians they study? What does ethnomusicology have to offer?

There is a need to emphasize the critical situation of Afghan performing arts, especially music. What follows are some proposals concerning Afghanistan's living musical heritage:

- We must support the musicians economically, inside and outside Afghanistan.
- An effort should be made to document the past and set up archives in order to safeguard testimony to these musical traditions for the future.
- Support should be provided for instrument makers.
- There should be programmes for music education in Afghanistan, and Radio Kabul, Kabul TV, and other local stations should be re-instated.
- Steps should be taken towards creating a free musical climate.

The above proposals could be achieved with the support and help of the rich Western countries, all of whom were involved in the twenty-three years of the Afghan civil war. <

Dr Jan van Belle *is a clarinet and saxophone teacher, and a musicologist. His current research concerns the music of the Ismaili communities inTajik and Afghan Badakhshan. In addition to this he is working on a project for the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) in London, UK. E-mail: van.Belle@planet.nl*



Detailed map of Badakhshan District

Nelles Maps

Afghan Badakhshan and the Nizari Ismailis

In 1895, during the so-called "Great Game" between Victorian England and Czarist Russia, the mountainous area called Badakhshan was divided into two parts with the Panj River (the source of the magical Oxus or Amu-Darya River) running between them as the border. These days, the left bank region is the north-eastern province of Afghanistan, while the right bank region belongs to Tajikistan and is still known as Gorno-Badakhshan Oblast (GBAO), the Autonomous Region of Gorno-Badakhshan. The high mountains of the Pamirs are mainly situated in Tajik Badakhshan. Only small parts of the river valleys there are inhabited.

The inhabitants are ethnic Tajiks and can best be described as mountain-Tajiks. They belong mainly to the Nizari Ismailis, Shi`i Muslims who recognize the fourth Agha Khan and forty-ninth Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni as their spiritual leader. In Afghan Badakhshan, settlements of Ismailis are situated along the left bank of the Panj river and in the Wakhan corridor in the eastern part of the province. - ***JvB*** <

Notes >

1 This research trip was undertaken together with Dr Gabrielle van den Berg, a specialist in Persian poetry and Pamir languages.

2 Supported by WOTRO and the IIS (Institute of Ismaili Studies)

3 I had planned to go to Afghan Badakhshan in 1998, but found that the civil war and the fighting between warlords made crossing the border impossible. However, during a run of food supplies in rubber boats across the river by FOCUS, I bribed the Russian border police to allow Afghan musicians to cross over. On that occasion, I managed only two recording sessions of Afghan musicians at the Tajik side of the Panj river in the Rushan/Shughnan area, so I did additional research in Tajik Badakhshan.

4 In general, education has always been an important part of Ismaili life and, in spite of all problems, I saw many children out on the roads and dressed in their typical school uniforms. In some villages, due to the absence of a building, open-air schools were organized, although teachers complained that the village couldn't pay them for their work.

References & Sources in Publications

Baily, John, "Recent Changes in the *dutâr* of Herat", *Asian Music*, 8, 1 (1976); 29-64.

_____, "A System of Modes used in the Urban Music of Afghanistan", *Ethnomusicology*, XXV, 1 (1981); 1-39.

_____, "Music Structure and Human Movement", in Peter Howell, Ian Cross and Robert West (eds), *Musical Structure and Cognition*, London: Academic Press (1985); 237-258.

_____, *Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan*, 16mm, 52 mins, RAI Film Archive (1985).

_____, *Music of Afghanistan: Professional Musicians in the City of Herat*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1988). With accompanying audio cassette.

_____, *The Making of "Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan". A Study Guide to the Film*. London: RAI (1990).

_____, "The Role of Music in the Creation of an Afghan National Identity, 1923-73" in *Music, Ethnicity and Identity: The Musical Construction of Place*, Martin Stokes (ed.), Oxford: Berg Publishers (1994); 45-60.

_____, "*The naghma-ye kashâl* of Afghanistan" in *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 6 (1997);117-163.

_____, "Music and Refugee Lives: Afghans in Eastern Iran and California" in *Forced Migration Review*, 6 (2000);10-13.