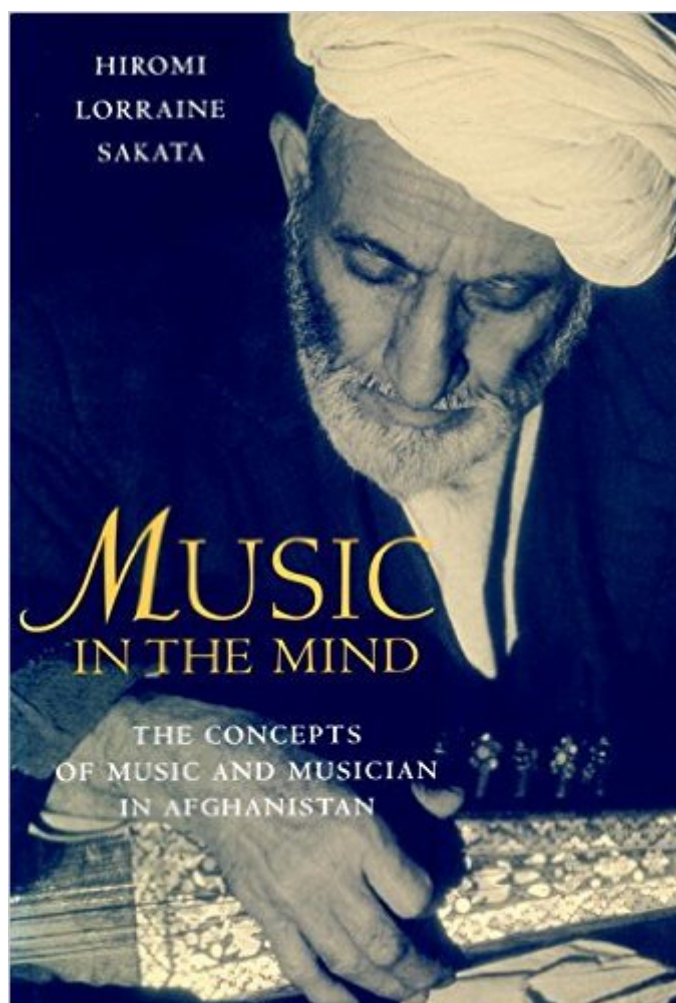


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# Music In The Mind: The Concepts Of Music And Musician In Afghanistan



## Synopsis

Music is central to many important events in the Islamic world. Yet many members of Islamic society who follow the teachings of the Qur'an hold music and musicians in very little regard. Hiromi Lorraine Sakata examined this paradox during her research in Afghanistan in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and produced this insightful book. Through case studies in the city of Herat (western Afghanistan), the remote provincial capital Faizabad (northeastern Afghanistan), and the village of Khadir (central Afghanistan), Sakata discusses traditional Islamic concepts of music and musician and interprets modern attitudes towards them both. She pays particular attention to the term *musiqi* (which can be generally translated as "secular music") and how misinterpretations of this construct may be the root of Western misunderstandings about music and musicians in Muslim societies. Sakata collaborated with Smithsonian Folkways Recordings to produce a CD of Afghan music, which is included with the book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Around the same time in the late 1960s and early 1970s, before Afghanistan entered another extended period of war, two ethnomusicologists independently and in different regions came to this land to study its various musical traditions among differing ethnicities. Afghanistan is a nation created by a European committee drawing boundaries that ignored ethnic concentrations, and indeed the map shows a narrow extension just to buffer and separate the Russian influence from the British raj. Mark Slobin's book, which covers his work chiefly in the north plus runs into the east and Herat

in the west, is available free on his Wesleyan University web site and he has a 2-CD set of musical examples on Traditional Crossroads. The author of this book, Hiromi Lorraine Sakata, made her studies in Herat, in northeast Faizabad, and in central Khadir. She includes a CD with many brief examples and excerpts of the music she encountered. Sakata's book, frankly, is dry and exceedingly detailed in its comparisons. It focuses on two aspects: the definitions and differing status of a musician (amateur, semi-professional, and professional) and the forms of folk music. Neither ethnomusicologist had access to Sufis and their particular musical traditions and practices. Another feature of the book is in the appendix: illustrations and descriptions of the musical instruments. My chief complaint about this scholarly dissertation is that it is lifeless and devoid of emotion. Still, the book does contribute to our understanding of this region's peoples and the function and nature of its music. It is a time capsule, however, and how 21st-century music technology has changed Afghanistan is yet to be determined.

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