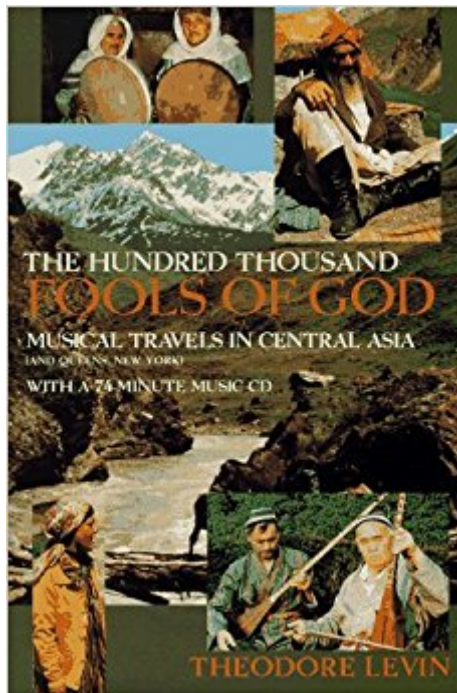


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The Hundred Thousand Fools Of God: Musical Travels In Central Asia (and Queens, New York)



Synopsis

"This erudite, absorbing volume chronicles the travels of ethnomusicologist Theodore Levin through urban and rural Transoxania... He writes in evocative, imaginative, personalized prose that vividly captures the flavor of his everyday experiences, providing plush visual detail, trenchant character profiles, attention to perplexing local hospitality codes and the shaping hand of gender, throughout." -- Slavic Review..". extremely informative, using music as a platform for a much wider discussion of cultural and political issues." -- Times Literary Supplement, London"

"The subject is music, but Levin uses it to cast a wider light, revealing places of considerable sorrow long hidden in the shadows of Soviet power, and to create a travelogue with wide potential appeal.... Candor about his own uncertainties and personal struggles helps make this a personal as well as a scholarly adventure." -- Publishers Weekly (starred review)"

"Not to be missed by those interested in music and world culture... " -- Library Journal..". may be destined to become the definitive work on the music of this newly accessed region." -- Dirty Linen

The Hundred Thousand Fools of God assembles a living musical and ethnographic map by highlighting the fate of traditions, beliefs, and social relationships in Muslim and Jewish Central Asian cultures during and after seventy years of Soviet rule. Theodore Levin evokes the spectacular physical and human geography of the area and weaves a rich ethnography of the life styles, values, and art of the musical performers. Photographs, maps, and an accompanying CD (featuring 24 on-site recordings) make The Hundred Thousand Fools of God a unique reading and listening experience.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Six years ago, I wrote my first review for , of Richard N. Frye's "Bukhara: The Medieval Achievement". Frye's work, concentrating mostly on the 10th and 11th centuries, described in detail how Turkic-speaking nomads combined with Iranian city dwellers and Arab bringers of a new religion to create a new synthesis in Islam in Central Asia, particularly in the city of Bukhara. That syncretic Islam later became most instrumental in the development of the Muslim faith in the Indian subcontinent. Levin's THE HUNDRED THOUSAND FOOLS OF GOD mainly describes the condition of music and musicians in the 1990s in the modern republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. That same Richard N. Frye provides a strong endorsement on the back cover. I too find that this volume is a worthy successor in the on-going "project" of bringing Central Asian history and culture before Western eyes. The musical world of Central Asia still involves synthesis and syncretism---between the West and tradition, between new conservatism and older tolerance, between Soviet atheism and local spirituality, between Islam and older religions which we might label shamanistic, and between so-called ethnic groups like Uzbeks and Tajiks. Levin travelled around the region with a musical companion, Otanazar Matyakubov, who provided endless contacts and insights. Together they interviewed and listened to all the varied performers of Central Asian music, from a female pop singer to humble performers of classical styles, from healers in remote villages who used music in their rituals to performers at schmaltzy Jewish weddings in the transplanted Bukharan Jewish community in Queens, New York.

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