

II

SONGS OF NORTH NEW GUINEA

second edition

first edition:

Songs of North New Guinea

Oudheidkundige Dienst in Ned.Indië

Musicologisch Onderzoek II

uitgegeven door het Koninklijk

Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten

en Wetenschappen 1931

During the Fourth Pacific Science Congress, held at Batavia in 1929, the Royal Batavia Society organized an ethnographical exhibition at which there were, among others, representatives from some of the tribes of the north coast of West New Guinea. There were some families from Serui, the principal village of Yapèn, that narrow and long island which partly closes Geelvink Bay, the large bay in the north of West New Guinea, making an inland sea of it. Also present were some people from the Waropèn Coast, i.e., the east coast of Geelvink Bay, and men and women from Hollandia (now Sukarnopura) and Sarmi, villages on the shores of Humboldt Bay in the extreme eastern part of West New Guinea.

It was due to the kindness of the Board of Directors of the Royal Batavia Society and of its curator, Mr. Ch. Le Roux, that recordings were made of the songs and instrumental music of all the tribes that were represented, including these Papuans.

Recently, my book *A Study on Papuan Music* has been published¹ and because the recording of the songs of these Papuans have been partly used there I have thought it best for the transcriptions of those songs to be published first.

In this work I have not tried to measure intervals. In these songs, which are often rather long, the intonation of the different tones is no more constant than in unaccompanied Western songs. The character of the intervals, however, is so extraordinarily "Western", differing only slightly from the European diatonic intervals, that I have no hesitation in offering the transcriptions, in staff notation, as being a true approximation of the original.

The form of Papuan music and its different types have been discussed in *A Study on Papuan Music* and I think, therefore, that the songs given here require only brief comment.

A marked preference for second and third intervals should be noted in these songs — as in nearly all primitive vocal music. Nos. I and VI consist exclusively of seconds; No. XIII has minor and major thirds only; Nos. II, III, VII, IX, X, XI, XII and XIV use seconds and

¹ Publication V of the Netherlands East Indies Committee for Scientific Research, Batavia 1931. [= SPM, see the second edition in part I of this work].

major and/or minor thirds alternately. Of the remaining six songs, No. XV displays seconds and thirds, as well as a fourth; Nos. V and XVI, a fifth; No. VIII a fourth and a fifth; Nos. IV and XVII only have more variety of intervals. No. IV, besides having seconds and thirds, has the diminished fourth and the seventh; No. XVII, which in other respects, too, forms a class on its own, has the diminished and the pure fourth, the fifth, the minor and the major seventh and once, even a minor tenth. This last interval, however, and also the seventh in song IV, is not so much a melodic interval as a result of the lively beginning of a new phrase. Apart from this, the second and third elements always prevail.

The range and the division of the octave in the various songs are shown in the table at the end of this work.



A. Nos. I—III of the five songs from Yapèn, (Nos. I—V), with their pure Australian “tiled” melody, are very primitive. For comparison, I have included among the examples a song, No. XIX, from central Australia taken from recordings made by Dr. E. Harold Davies, D. Mus., on different expeditions which were under the auspices of the Board of Anthropological Research of the University of Adelaide and financed by the Rockefeller Foundation.²

I feel a Malay influence in the more developed songs: such semitone intervals, used melodically, as occur in these songs are seldom found in the music of the coastal tribes living further to the east³ and in those of the people of the central range,⁴ but they are very common in Malayo-Polynesian music. Nos. III and IV have a range of a tenth; for primitive songs this is a rather large one.

B. The Waropèn songs Nos. VI and VII, the only songs in this collection sung by a woman, with their limited range of a second and a

² Recorded under Nos. PRX 9—11 by Columbia Graphophone Austr. Ltd. These records, besides containing a large number of songs, also have a lecture about Australian aboriginal song by Dr. Davies. He also draws attention to the fact that these melodies use just the same intervals as Western music, though these natives have developed their culture secluded from the rest of the world.

³ Three examples are given by K. Gjellerup (*Tijdschr. Bat. Gen.* LVII, 1916, pp. 42, 43 and 49), but their notation would not seem to be quite reliable, see SPM § 3 [= pp. 18—34 in this work].

⁴ One example is given by Wirz (*Nova Guinea* XVI, p. 115, the 3rd fragment).

fifth, respectively, are more primitive than Nos. VIII—XI. These again, seem to show Malay influence which, as far as the Waropèn Coast and Yapèn are concerned, has I think come from Tidore which dominated the coastal population of West New Guinea as far as Humboldt Bay for a considerable time.

Song No. VI has a one-step pattern and No. VII is built up from a major and a minor third, whereas Nos. VIII—XI display a backbone of a more or less solid fourth (No. VIII) or fifth. No. XI, in its second phrase, has a charming alternation of the major and the minor third (F/A besides F/A_b).

C. The songs from Humboldt Bay (Nos. XII—XVII), between them, display much difference in development. Songs XII and XIII are very simple; Nos. XIV and XVI, with a tonal range of a sixth, and No. XV, with one of an octave are, rhythmically, on a higher level. The finest song of the series, however, is No. XVII with its remarkable tonal range of no less than one octave + a fourth, and 8 degrees within the octave.

A comparison between song No. XVI and one of Dr. Davies' Australian songs (see No. XVIII) will show the close relationship between Papuan and Australian music. The Humboldt Bay song can be regarded as the plagal counterpart of the Australian song. If the various tone degrees used in these Humboldt Bay songs are put together in scalar succession, semi-tone intervals will frequently be seen (see the Table). *These, however, are never used melodically.*

* * *

I was unable to note down the texts of these songs, with the exception of Nos. I and III which consist of a monotonous repetition of the same word, let alone translate them because the time at my disposal was too short (12 days and seventeen different tribes) and in addition, I was totally ignorant of the languages in which they were sung. The singers did not understand Malay and it was only with difficulty and considerable loss of time that I even succeeded in telling them what I wanted them to do.

The subject matter of these songs is unknown to me and neither do I know on what occasions they would be sung. Songs XIV and XVII are the only ones about which I was able to get any information. No. XIV, *Ahabra*, is sung by the family of a girl when she is given

in marriage, and is addressed to the bridegroom. In it the groom is told that he can take the girl as his wife as soon as he has paid the price for her. No. XVII is a festal song.

The recordings are clear on the whole. The songs are generally repeated several times, the repetitions having melodic and rhythmic variations, though these are usually small. Where these are of some importance, as in Nos. IV, IX, X and XIV, I have inserted more than one strophe.

The manner of singing is careless and rough to Western ears, the voices being coarse and untrained, yet some of these songs, and the performance of them, have their charm, for example, Nos. XI and XVII, especially the latter. The song called *Tinguam*, with its unequal periods, its repeated vigorous beginnings, its lively figures and its climaxes, uncommon in Papuan music, is a free light-hearted festal song. Another peculiarity is the changing of the principal tones and therefore of basic intervals: at first they consist of the sequence A—G—E—C \sharp ,⁵ then (after the double bar) of the octave D¹—D which is divided alternately into a fifth and a fourth and a fourth and a fifth, depending on whether the A or the G comes to the fore as a “framework tone”. To Western ears, this change gives the impression of a change of tonality, viz., from D to G.

It is not yet possible to draw *definite* conclusions with regard to the cultural influences that Papuan songs may show, for not enough songs have been recorded. The view that Papuan “tiled” melody is Australian is based upon the fact that in the area surrounding New Guinea, only the songs of the Australian aborigines and those of the people living on the islands in Torres Strait frequently have this melodic form.⁶

In *A Study on Papuan Music* I ventured to attribute the peculiar “fanfared” music to a very old culture, probably of Negrito origin, supporting my opinion with certain arguments. In those songs from the west of West New Guinea in which semi-tone intervals are used melodically, I am inclined to assume a Malayo-Polynesian influence. I have, not yet, however, succeeded in associating the Melanesian

⁵ The tritone — like in this case the interval G—C \sharp plays an important part in the music (and also the vocal music) of the Austronesian archipelago, not only in the Negrito-influenced east (besides New Guinea also, e.g., in Flores), but also in the “Indonesian” west (e.g. Nias).

⁶ I refer again to the records of Columbia Graphophone Austr. Ltd., and also to Myers, in the *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Strait* Vol. IV, pp. 238—269, and to Von Hornbostel, ‘Melodie und Skala’, *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* Vol. XIX (1913) p. 11 et seq.

element, which is undoubtedly present in the songs of East New Guinea, particularly in the former German part, with certain definite characteristics. The necessary data are still lacking. Perhaps Dr. Kolinski, who is studying the recordings from New Guinea that are in the Berlin Phonogram Archives, will be successful in defining the Melanesian element in Papuan music. These recordings, of which there are 500 or more, were made chiefly in the former German part of New Guinea.

The principal thing to be done now is to increase the material before the spread of civilization makes it impossible for recordings to be made of genuine autochthonous songs. This is the only way that musicology will be able to contribute to a wider and reliable knowledge of the races and the cultures of which the Papuans and their civilization are the product.

Bandung, January 1931.

A. YAPÈN (village of Serui)

....., sung by Kamasepadai.

I
(phon. M.A. 65b)

f Ha - ba - ha - wè, ba - ha - wè, ba-ha-wè, ba-ha - wè. *p*

....., sung by id.

II
(phon. M.A. 65a)

f *p*

....., sung by id.

III
(phon. M.A. 65c)

f Ya - ma - nè, ya - ma - nè, ya - ma - nè, ya - ma - nè, ya - ma - nè. *pp*

Song called KAJOBI, sung by Aitai.

2nd. or 3rd. strophe.

IV
(phon. M.A. 64a)

f *pp*

another strophe.

Song called AMI, sung by Aitai.

V
(phon. M.A. 64b)

fragment of another strophe:

B. WAROPÈN COAST

Song called MUNA, sung by a woman.

VI.
(phon. M.A. 60a)

Song called URÉRÉ, sung by a woman.

VII.
(phon. M.A. 60b)

Song called MUNABAI, sung by Aidiri.

VIII.
(phon. M.A. 63b)

Song called RANO, sung by Sindusi.

IX
(phon. M.A. 62)

2nd. strophe.

3rd. strophe.

4th. strophe. $3/4 = 4/8$.

etc.

Song called SAIRA, sung by Aidiri.

X
(phon. M.A. 63a)

2nd. strophe:

3rd. strophe:

5th. strophe:

6th. strophe:

*) The sign \sim indicates an oscillation of tone in downward direction.

Song called MUNABAI, sung by Sindusi.

XI
(phon. M.A. 61)

The musical score for 'MUNABAI' consists of six staves of bass clef notation. The first staff begins with a *mf* dynamic and features time signatures of 3/8, 4/8, and 3/8. The second staff continues with 4/8 and 3/8 time signatures. The third staff includes a *p* dynamic marking and a *mf* dynamic marking. The fourth staff features a *p* dynamic marking. The fifth staff begins with a *mf* dynamic and has a 4/8 time signature. The sixth staff concludes the piece with a 3/8 time signature.

Song called WAREPU, sung by id.

XII
(phon M.A. 58b)

The musical score for 'WAREPU' consists of a single staff of bass clef notation, ending with a double bar line and the word 'etc.' to the right.

C. HUMBOLDT BAY

Song called SESANDO, sung by Johan, the head of the village (Hollandia).

XIII
(phon M.A. 58a)

The musical score for 'SESANDO' consists of two staves of bass clef notation. The first staff includes a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' above it. The second staff begins with 'etc.' and concludes with a double bar line and 'etc.' to the right.

Song called ORAKABOAI, sung by Poreo.

XIV
(phon. M.A. 59)

1st. strophe:

4th. strophe:

5th. strophe:

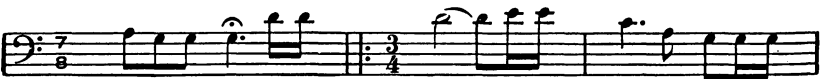
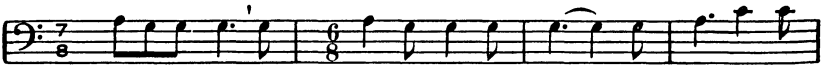
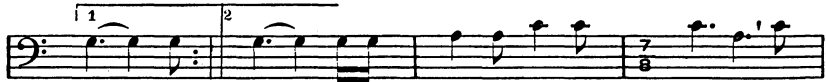
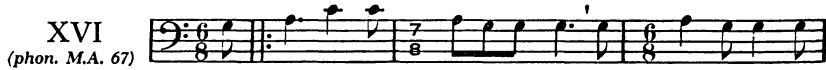
Song called AHABRA, sung by Poreo.

XV
(phon. M.A. 59b)

variant:

Song called MANDÉ, sung by Simon, the head of the village (Hollandia).

XVI
(phon. M.A. 67)



etc. (further psalmodizing on the notes G-A-C-A-G).

Song called TINGUAN, sung by Imona (village of Sarmi).

XVII
(phon. M.A. 56)

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in bass clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various dynamics such as *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *f* (forte). Numerous triplets are indicated by a '3' above the notes. A fermata is present over a note in the sixth staff. A double bar line with repeat dots appears at the end of the sixth staff. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the tenth staff.

mf

stringendo *a tempo*

etc.

Detailed description: This musical score is written for a bass clef instrument in the key of G major (one sharp). It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a triplet of eighth notes. The second and third staves continue with similar rhythmic patterns, including more triplets. The fourth staff has two triplets. The fifth staff contains a triplet and another triplet. The sixth staff is marked with *stringendo* and contains a triplet, followed by *a tempo* with two triplets. The seventh staff has a triplet. The eighth staff has a triplet. The ninth staff has a septuplet (marked with a '7') and a triplet. The tenth staff concludes with a few notes and the instruction *etc.*

Song from South Australia. *)

XVIII

Song from Central Australia. **)

XIX

D.C.

*) See p. 85.
 **) See p. 84.

