Ethnic Folkmays Library

Songs of ASSAM, UTTAR PRADESH Folkmays Records FC 4380 and the ANDAMANS

Recorded by the Department of Anthropology, Government of India



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and the ANDAMANS UTTAR PRADESH Songs of ASSAM,

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Ethnic Folkways Library Songs of ASSAM, Folkways Records Fe 4580 UTTAR PRADESH and the ANDAMANS Recorded by the Department of Anthropology, Government of India

These recordings, made by the Department of Anthropology of the Government of India, are primarily of the songs of villagers of Assam. The recordings were made in the villages of Mebo, Balek and Damroh in the Abor Hills, and Kohima in the Naga Hills.

Two additional recordings give examples of the music of Jaunsari people of Uttar Pradesh, recorded in the villages of Mohana and Konain, and the last piece on Side II is an example of singing in the Andaman islands.

No inherent unity between the cultures or music of these three groups is implied. This album of tribal music is intended rather to further our knowledge of the diverse traditions of South Asia, and to supplement other Ethnic Folkways Library Albums such as Folk Music of India, Traditional and Classical Music of India, Religious Music of India, Folk Music of Pakistan, Music of South Asia, Folk Music of Southeast Asia, etc.

The vast storehouse of musical tradition in South Asia is largely untapped for the Westerner. It is hoped that this album will help to fill out the picture.

SIDE I, Band 1: ABOR SONG NO. 1: Recorded in Siluk, Abor Hills, Assam.

This song is sung on festivals when the singer tells the story of origin of the world, etc.

"O you girls and all others who are sitting here listen to me. Let us look to the past and see what is there. Irsi was a blacksmith, son of Digir and grandson of mother Sedi. Nomkir was also a blacksmith. All the people have been made by these blacksmiths."

SIDE I, Band 2: ABOR SONG NO. 2: Recorded in Siluk, Abor Hills, Assam.

This song is usually sung before the guests for their reception. The girl leading the song says:

"All our own people of the village have gathered. The well-to-do people from the plains have also come. Somehow, even though we do not know much, some music is to be given for the entertainment of all. Our brethren the interpreters are here, the big people from the plains are also here so whatever little we know or have to say we will say through our song."

SIDE I, Band 3: ABOR SONG NO. 3: Recorded in Mebo, Abor Hills, Assam.

The song is usually sung on ceremonial occasions or festivals. Commencing the story of the origin of all things of the world the man leading the song says:

"Long long ago Sedi was our first mother and it is she who started making all things for us. The entire world got life through her. This very ground of the village where we are living was previously without any green colour. Then Sedi brought green colour from very high mountains and gave it to our earth and thus all tree leaves etc. have become green now."

SIDE I, Band 4: ABOR SONG NO. 4: Recorded in Mebo, Abor Hills, Assam.

This song is usually sung on occasions when some guests are received by the village folk. The singer leading the song says:

"Many people from outside are our guests this evening. The people of our village have also gathered. So you girls should now sing loudly and entertain the assembly here with whatever music they want to hear."

SIDE I, Band 5: ABOR SONG NO. 5: Recorded in Balek, Abor Hills, Assam.

This song can be sung on all occasions. The leading man of song starts with the name of a bridge over a river in Minyong Abor Area. He says:

"Up on the hills there is a marshy place where all the birds come down to drink water. There are also special kinds of trees the fruit of which is sweet and flocks of birds come in order to eat the fruits of those trees. South side again there is a rock in the river bed where also the birds come and sit."

Note: The names of birds and trees mentioned in the song are significant for their importance in the dreams of Abor people. Seeing of such things in dreams is auspicious or ominous according to belief.

SIDE I, Band 6: ABOR SONG NO. 6: Recorded in Damroh, Abor Hills, Assam.

The song is sung on festivals when the singer tells the story of the origin of the world, etc.

"Listen you all who have gathered here. Let us first remember the old miris (singers), who have sung earlier. Let us also remember our old gods and goddesses who are numerous and who are all powerful though we do not see them. Let us take the names of Litung, Tungkar and Karduk. Let us also take the names of Limang, Mangkar and Karpung. Karpung was a young woman. You all who have gathered here should know that in very old days it was all dark and nothing could be seen."

SIDE II, Band 1: ABOR SONG NO. 6A:
(Continuation of Band 6)
Recorded in Damroh,
Abor Hills, Assam.

"It was all dark in the beginning. Then Irmya-Myane gave light to the world through his eyes so that Sedi and Melo could produce children. Irmya-Myane, however, while producing light, fell down dead and again all, the mountains, the rivers and the plain lands were covered with darkness. Then there was the black-smith Sedi-Sepi or Segi-Sepi. He was a good black-smith. He, with his water, washed the eyes of Irmya-Myane which earlier gave light to the world. After these eyes were washed by Segi-Sepi, they again started shining and thus these two eyes in the form of Sun and Moon gave light to the world. This was accomplished by that black-smith."

SIDE II, Band 2: ANGAMI NAGA SONG NO. 1: Recorded in Kohima, Naga Hills, Assam.

The song is a mixed chorus sung after the village folk come back from cultivation fields and sit by the fireside.

"Come let us all enjoy ourselves and then let us sing about Thenuza who was the wife of a brave hero of the past."

This is a love song sung in a duet, in which the girl says to the boy:

"Listen, my name is Thenuza - name for truth and sincerity. So whatever promises I made to you are all sincere promises. They are not like edges of sword or Dao which break."

SIDE II, Band 3: ANGAMI NAGA SONG NO. 2: Recorded in Kohima, Naga Hills, Assam.

This is a Sekreni Festival song.

"There was a widow whose son had died young. One night the widow dreamt of her son standing at the gate of the seventh stage of heaven where the insects eat away one's body. But the boy was not eaten up. The widow asked the boy to come back but the boy refused. The widow knew that her son was brave and would not return so she came back. Now that widow wonders as to what happened to her son."

SIDE II, Band 4: JAUNSARI SONG NO. 1:
Recorded in Mohana,
Jaunsar Bower, Uttar
Pradesh.

It is a love song sung by parties of boys and girls together. The name of the song is 'ande pande ko geet'. It is sung during the Magh festival.

"A maina (Indian cuckoo) is sitting high up on the hill in its nest quite lonely. The water of river Jamuna is quite cold. The eyes of maina require glasses while the tresses of hair are uncovered. Yet the uncovered tresses of hair look quite beautiful. O maina, you have charmed me, I love you, how is it with you."

Maina stands for the girl while sua (parrot) for the lover.

SIDE II, Band 5: JAUNSARI SONG NO. 2:
Recorded in Konain,
Jaunsar Bower, Uttar
Pradesh.

The song is sung by men only. The name of the song is Harul. It is sung during the festivals.

The singers, commencing the story of Okumiya, a man of Nahan State, say:

"Let us all remember the names of 4 brothers, the Gods. Let us remember the Sarairo temple and also the sacred hole in the earth named Churi. Old losses should be forgotten and people should get to work. Let us tell about Okumiya in a Harul song. Okumiya of Nahan received a message that he was called."

SIDE II, Band 6: ANDAMANESE SONG.

Recorded in Port Blair,

Andaman Islands.

Mixed chorus. The boys and girls have gathered and are saying:

"Let us all go and catch turtles."

NOTES BY DEPARTMENT OF ANTHOPOLOGY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA GENERAL EDITOR, HAROLD COURLANDER PRODUCTION DIRECTOR, MOSES ASCH

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