

# **FOLK MUSIC OF THE AMAMI ISLANDS**

**Recorded by Douglas Haring**



**Ethnic Folkways Library FE 4448**



# FOLK MUSIC OF THE AMAMI ISLANDS

## Ethnic Folkways Library #E 4448

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET  
COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

WAKA ROSHO	TWO CHILDREN'S SONGS
SHIGIN	ITO KURI BUSHI
ASABANA HAYARI BUSHI	ICHIKAYA BUSHI
SHUMICHI NAGAHAMA	YERABU NAGAKUMO BUSHI
IMA NU KAZEKUMO	UMI NO SASAKUSA
MOCHI MORAI UTA	BON ODORI
YERABU YURI NO HANA	BO ODORI
SHIMA SODACHI	HACHIGATSU ODORI
RANKAN BASHI BUSHI	TE ODORI



# FOLK MUSIC OF THE AMAMI ISLANDS

By Douglas G. Haring

From Okinawa to Japan Proper stretches a chain of islands called Amami Archipelago, or the Northern Ryūkyūs. Great Amami, the largest, is approximately triangular, 36 miles long and 18 miles wide at the base. Kakeroma Island, closely paralleling the base of the triangle, usually is counted as part of Great Amami. Both are extremely rugged and offer glorious scenery of mountain, beach, and fjord. North of Great Amami the island chain dwindles to scattered islets. To the east, the small but level and fertile island of Kikai contrasts strikingly with rugged Great Amami. Southward toward Okinawa stands Tokuno, next in size to Great Amami. Northern Tokuno is rugged, but the southern part is level and fertile. Still further south lie the smaller islands of Okiyera-bu (Yerabu for short!) and Yoron, both level and agriculturally well-favored.

Despite the limited area and rough terrain, Great Amami is home to 110,000 persons--half the population of Amami Archipelago. Nearly all of the people are farmers and fisherfolk whose toil extracts a meager living from a region whose scenic beauty exceeds its resources. The people are smaller physically and slightly darker of skin than are most of the Japanese. The men are well-muscled, the women graceful and beautifully proportioned. While modern Amamians have learned in school to speak standard Japanese, at least sixteen ancient dialects survive in the villages. By history and cultural tradition Amamians are more closely identified with Japan than are the Okinawans. Amami preserves ancient customs and songs long forgotten in Japan Proper but well-attested in Japanese history. For example, the oldest Japanese documents refer to general use of "high storehouses" (takakura)--thatched buildings elevated on posts eight feet above the ground, out of reach of rats and other pests. These buildings long ago disappeared for Japan Proper, but they occur everywhere on Amami. Their cultural prototypes are reported from Formosa and other islands south and east of Asia.

In Japan Proper the oldest written records--from the eighth century A.D.--hint at archaic practices such as brother-sister marriage, and religious and civil prominence of women. Modern Japan knows such customs only vaguely from early documents. In Amami, however, these age-old Japanese practices are understood, partly from traditions that stem from the recent past, and partly from customs that still continue. References to brother-sister marriage abound in Amamian folklore; whatever the actual situation in the past, the relation of brother and sister continues tenderly intimate. A sister's spirit guards her younger brother throughout life; if he is in peril at sea, her spirit flies above him as a white bird of protection. Amami women maintain status probably similar to that of women in the Japan of a millennium ago, before the assimilation of Buddhist and Confucian teachings. Religion, for example, is women's business; the past survives in an aristocratic hierarchy of divine priestesses called Noro. Women generally deal with supernatural powers; some of the shamans or spirit-mediums are female and the male shamans are transvestites. Practitioners of black magic, like the witches, also are female. In contrast to Occidental beliefs, Amamians think of witches as young and beautiful.

Skilled handicrafts are not numerous in Amami. The struggle to exist on overcrowded islands deficient in natural resources leaves scant opportunity for specialized crafts of the sort for which the Japanese are famous. An outstanding achievement, however, is the weaving of one of the world's superb textiles--a silk pongee whose designs are made by a precise and intricate dyeing process known technically as ikat. This cloth, called tsumugi, is the preferred material for kimonos among well-to-do matrons in Japan Proper. Since the designs are identical on both sides of the cloth, and because it endures for generations, "Ōshima tsumugi" kimonos are treasured by their owners and handed down from mother to daughter. Perhaps the world knows no more meticulous and complex handicraft; certainly no finer ikat dyeing and weaving are done elsewhere. The designs are drawn on cross-section paper each line of which indicates a thread; the colorful patterns are worked out with endless patience and the exact color scheme of each individual thread is charted. Then by a resist-dye process the threads are dyed, arranged precisely in the loom to bring out the final pattern as they are woven painstakingly by the women. No wonder that spinning and weaving songs are prominent in the folk music.

Amamian families exhibit strong ties of affection, not only between man and wife, parents and children, and siblings, but between families connected by marriage. When love fails, violence may be the court of final resort; perhaps this is an aspect of the free and uninhibited expression of most emotions. Once again,





Amami Oshima singers (left to right) :

Yamashita, Tokunaga (translator), E. Kazari, K. Fukushima, T. Kazari.

Amamians appear to resemble the tenth century Japanese more than they resemble the people of modern Japan--the latter have inherited centuries of Chinese-style sophistication combined with discipline under stern dictators, and more recently, Euro-American influence. The United States recognized Amami's close cultural unity with Japan when, in 1953, Amami Archipelago was returned to Japan, although Okinawa and the southern Ryūkyūs remain under American control for strategic reasons until the Communist threat abates.

Like other Ryūkyūans, Amamians cherish a rich repertory of songs and folk-dances. These arts betray influences from the South Sea peoples in the Philippines and Indonesia, as well as Chinese influence that came via Okinawa. The people sing and dance light-heartedly on all occasions; nevertheless, an underlying strain of sadness in many of their songs recalls nearly three centuries of serfdom under the

Japanese duchy of Satsuma. The romantic glamour of true love as a major theme pervades their outlook--an attitude reminiscent of the romances that have come down from the ninth and tenth century Japanese Court at Kyōto. Numerous Amamians claim descent from refugee Taira nobles who were forced to flee from Kyōto in a twelfth century civil war. Many a present-day song or dance is attributed to these Taira settlers in Great Amami and Kikai.

Everywhere in the Ryūkyūs the "August dances" constitute the major festive occasion of the year. Although the people sing and dance at all seasons, the harvest festivals of August and September bring together young and old to dance and sing night after night. These August odori mark the rejoicing that follows the garnering of crops, before the work of fall planting begins. The other major festive occasion, the New Year, is celebrated by village folk late in our January, since the ancient Chinese lunar calendar still determines the round of rural living.



The principal musical instrument, the three-stringed banjo-like iyabisen, was derived from China via Okinawa. It is the prototype of the Japanese samisen. Traditionally the body of a iyabisen is covered with snake skin, for poisonous snakes abound in the islands. Other instruments include bamboo flutes, gongs, and many kinds of drums.

"Good singing", as in Japan Proper, is nasalized with much resort to falsetto, numerous quavers, and practiced breaks of the voice. Many songs call for a hyashi or supplemental voice; usually the hayashi sings meaningless syllables--probably archaic words of forgotten meaning. To Occidental ears the local folk songs are more tuneful as one moves southward toward Okinawa, perhaps in consequence of diffusion of Chinese themes from Okinawa. Comparison of songs recorded from Tokuno and Yerabu with those of Great Amami reveals this difference. In modern times the guitar has won popularity along with all kinds of European music. Naze City, on Great Amami, boasts a number of dance halls in which ballroom dancing and up-to-date jazz capture the fancy of the young.

Amami boasts numerous male and female professional singers. In addition to the songs and dances of geisha girls at entertainments and feasts, there frequently are concerts of folk music. Teachers offer instruction in both traditional and European-style music. Some of the singers who performed for the accompanying record are outstanding professionals and teachers. Mr. Eikichi Kazari and his son Toshio Kazari recently published in Tokyo a book of Amami folk songs in which the music is rendered in Occidental notation. The text of most of the songs translated below was taken from that book. Among other accomplishments, the elder Kazari, a lifelong student of the island music and folklore, is the respected dean and arbiter of musical matters. All of the recordings here presented were possible through his unflinching courtesy; he persuaded the singers to record their voices and his unflagging interest carried the project to success. The dignity of age enhances the prestige of an Amamian singer; what time subtracts from his or her vocal powers is compensated amply by the diversified repertory acquired in long experience.

Amamian folksongs, with few exceptions, belong in the open. A peasant sings as he toils over a narrow mountain trail or labors in the fields; his wife and daughter sing at the loom, at household tasks, or as they trudge from the fields bearing produce in their back-baskets. Young couples slip away from their elders to sing on a beach under the moon, or play the iyabisen and sing together in a little hut in the fields. A lover serenades his kana (sweetheart); in unromantic mood he may aim sarcastic or abusive songs at his rival. Most of these songs belong in a setting of misty mountains and tiny fields under the moon, as the people dance with surpassing grace in a circle about a tripod of

poles topped by a pitch-pine torch--or their notes drift across still water as a fisherman paddles his canoe homeward at dusk. Late in the evening revellers, arms interlocked and singing lustily, wend their unsteady way home. And in the sunshine of early morning, the clear voices of women singing at household tasks mingle with the plaintive bleating of the little white goats that are kept by nearly every family.

As with folk songs everywhere, words and melodies vary; each village may preserve its special versions of common songs. Singers from any district stage concerts in other villages and critical audiences compare variations. Usually a formal concert adheres to a published program for half of the evening; later on, anyone may volunteer to sing or play, or the audience calls for favorite songs by well-loved singers. Entire families attend such concerts; each family group sits together on the floor, babies play happily, friends converse between numbers, and young people drift to the back of the hall.

The texts of these songs are not easy to translate. The English versions given below, to say the least, are rendered freely. Generally the dialect is unintelligible to a Japanese from the main islands; sometimes the words have been passed down from remote antiquity and no one is really sure of their meaning. Like all Japanese poetry, the aim is to suggest a mood, not to tell a story or describe a scene. Another complication for the translator is that some of the Amamian vocabulary of romance becomes indecent when rendered into English--this despite the charm and delicacy of the original. This situation stems from social conventions that accept as delicate and beautiful certain words and ideas that the English language cannot express without obscene connotations--unless one resorts to the stilted language of physiology and medicine. Amamians also have words that are obscene and words that are technical and colorless, but in addition they possess a romantic and beautiful vocabulary of sex that offends no one. An example is the song called Shima Sodachi, translated literally as "Island Nurture." Sodachi defies translation; its primary meaning is tender nurture and loving care, as a mother cherishes her infant. Its secondary meaning is specifically and unambiguously sexual, but with delicate connotations of infinite tenderness and unstinted devotion. This song recently enjoyed wide popularity in Japan Proper, even though the dialect words were vaguely unclear there. Like other peoples, Amamians have also their quota of vulgar and obscene songs, songs of abuse and ridicule; life is not all hibiscus and moonlight.

Taken together with the graceful, carefree dances, these songs afford the principal aesthetic diversion of the people. The islands, despite thrilling scenic beauty, are poor and overcrowded; life is hard, and the common folk turn to song and dance--arts that require no expense--to alleviate the poverty and monotony of daily life.





Woodcutter's family

#### NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS

Side I, Band 1: A waka rōsho (A Japanese-style poem and song).. Sung by Mr. Kōgi Fukushima.

This Okinawan song was composed by a Japanese scholar, Shinobu Origuchi. The first stanza, composed before the Pacific War, hails the delights of the southern islands. After the war Mr. Origuchi added a second stanza charged with tremendous emotional significance throughout the Ryūkyū Islands; it is a lament for the so-called Heavenly Children, many of whom had come from Amami. The story has grown to the proportions of a patriotic legend and details are difficult to verify. These girls, allegedly 450\* in number, had been recruited by high-pressure methods by the Japanese Army to entertain the soldiers on Okinawa. During the American landing, they did as the soldiers did and sought refuge in one of the thousands of hillside caves. From these caves the Japanese soldiers fought the Americans by constant sniping and surprise sallies; this tactic was

countered by use of flame-throwers. When American voices called "Come out and surrender!" the terrified girls could not utter a sound, and all of them died in the flames. A probable majority of families throughout the islands mourn daughters, sisters, or cousins. At public memorial services in 1951 on Okinawa, most of those present believed that they heard the girls' voices singing in the sky; hence the name, Heavenly Children. Symbolic of the agony of the bereaved parents, this song plays an important role in contemporary Ryūkyūan psychology.

\*Probably the number has been exaggerated. An American soldier who inspected the site estimates the total as under 40. But popular belief holds to the larger number.



Side I, Band 2: A shigin (Recitative of a Chinese-style poem). Sung by Mr. Kōgi Fukushima.

Saigō Takamori, famous Japanese leader of Restoration days, is an outstanding figure in Amamian patriotism. After playing a leading role in the Meiji Restoration (1864-68) he perished at the head of the rebellious samurai who Quixotically challenged the new Imperial conscript army in the "Satsuma Rebellion." During an earlier political exile, Saigō lived on Okiyerabu for two years; subsequently he maintained a summer home on the northern end of Great Amami. Saigō composed this shigin to express gratitude to Seisho Tsuchimochi of Yerabu, for hospitality during his exile. In Japan Proper, Saigō has become a sort of patron saint of militarism; in Amami, he is remembered for kindness and devotion to the welfare of the people.

Side I, Band 3: Asabana Hayari Bushi (DAYBREAK; lit., "Flower of the Morning") Sung by Mr. Kōgi Fukushima of Chinzei Village on Kakeroma Island; hayashi by Mr. Eikichi Kazari of Naze.

Every musical program in Amami opens with Asabana. This greeting song is as inevitable as is "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the close of a meeting in the U.S. There are many Asabana variations; different villages sing different words to modified tunes; there is a "long Asabana," and of course, a "short Asabana." This version carries a strongly Buddhist flavor of the transience and futility of human affairs:

Hail!  
Parted so long, now you have come!  
Though together now  
When can we meet again?

Lonely, dallying on the beach,  
One hand fingers the sand  
One hand brushes at tears . . .

The familiar path to the house--  
So lightly we trod there--  
Now impassable, choked by tangled weeds.

Rather than waiting  
For dear ones to come . . .  
Better to wait  
For the waning moon!

Side I, Band 4: Shumichi Nagahama. Sung by Mr. Kōgi Fukushima.

This popular folksong deals with a legend of Sōmachi town on Kikai Island. It chronicles the tragic death of Shumichi Nagahama, suitor of a heartless beauty who loved her horses more than any man. He visited her more than a hundred times to plead his cause. Finally she pretended to relent, and suggested that he tie the horses to his feet while they made love. Just as she took him in her arms, she called to the horses, and the hapless suitor was dragged to a miserable death. The scene of this tragedy is said to be haunted by his ghost; people often hear the crying of a child at the spot.

Side I, Band 5: Ima nu Kazekumo (NOW THE DRIVEN CLOUDS). Sung by Mr. Kōgi Fukushima.

Filled with anxiety over her husband who is absent at sea, a wife watches the storm clouds and hears the rising wind. Underlined words are for the hayashi; this part is sung by Mr. Eikichi Kazari.

Now the driven clouds . .  
Haisōre!  
The wind rises  
Over the village  
Yohare yoi yoi  
Sora yoi tokose.

My husband, my beloved  
Haisōre!  
Out in the northern wastes!  
The wind rises  
Yohare yoi yoi  
Sora yoi tokose.

Toward Tokuno Isle--  
Does that brightness  
Move toward him?  
Does his sister's spirit guard him?

On the one hand, a withered branch,  
On the other, blossoms . . .  
O pray that the barren limb  
Also may blossom!

The third stanza alludes to the belief that a man's elder sister's spirit may watch over him in the form of a white bird in time of peril.

Side I, Band 6: Mochi Morai Uta. (SONG FOR REQUESTING MOCHI), from Amami Ōshima. Sung by Mayor Kaseda of Naze City, and Mesdames Giire, Take, and Hatake; iyabisen by Mr. Eikichi Kazari. This is an O Bon--or harvest--song, as sung by young people in Naze City on Great Amami as they beg mochi from house to house. (See Side II, Band 7.)

Side I, Band 7: Yerabu Yuri no Hana (LILIES OF YERABU). Sung by Miss Umeno Tajima, iyabisen by Mr. Eikichi Kazari.

This contemporary Amami folksong combines native style and European musical elements, with emphasis on the latter.

Okiyerabu Island is famed for lilies. Prior to World War II they were exported in great quantities to the west coast of the United States. Now they are grown in America and the demand has fallen off. This song is in standard Japanese language and often is sung to a guitar accompaniment, although here a iyabisen is used. Summarized, the meaning is: Yerabu lilies go to bloom in America; no matter how fierce the storms on the way to Yokohama, even if the ship is wrecked, do not throw out the flowers for they are the heart of Yerabu. In turn the money from





Girl with bobbin winding equipment

the lilies will make Yerabu blossom afresh. Yerabu is a good place, and all men are welcome when the lilies bloom in April and May.

Side I, Band 8: Shima Sodachi (ISLAND NURTURE). Sung by Miss Umeno

Tajima, jyabisen by Mr. Eikichi Kazari.

Another contemporary song that blends native and foreign styles. (See final paragraphs of introductory section, above). In this case the ideas and style of singing are completely Amamian. A few years ago Shima Sodachi swept Japan Proper as a major "hit." It is played there in many ways. Miss Tajima sings the dialect words with Tōkyō pronunciation; curiously, I purchased a record in Tōkyō that rendered it in dialect pronunciation. In varied metaphor, the poet compares the youthful beauty of his sweetheart to the brilliant bursting red pods of ripening cycad nuts; he sings of the grace of her figure, bred by the waves of the Black Current, the warm ocean stream that bathes Amami's shores; he tells of the winds that have caressed her and the guardian gods of the offing, and compares the steady beat of her loom to the rhythm of his lovelorn heart.

The cycad is raised universally in Amami as an emergency food, although as food it is universally detested. Before the Pacific War, the beautiful long fronds were exported to Java for funeral decorations--a source of income lost by the war. Known locally as sotetsu, it is a kind of sago palm that resists typhoon, drought, and flood. The none-too-palatable nuts

are dried and ground to flour as reserve against the crop failures that follow droughts and typhoons. A kind of sake brewed from cycad nuts is called doku sake (poison sake), for drinkers sometimes become violently ill. There is no denying, however, that cycads are decorative; the dark green fronds set off the cluster of red nuts strikingly. In Japan Proper, cycads do not become large because of the climate, and they are used strictly for decoration.

The song alludes to another Amami feature, the tatigami (lit., "standing god"); these are rocky islets, cone-shaped, at or near the mouth of a bay. Maps of Great Amami show at least eight of them. They are regarded as guardians of the bay. The reference to the Black Stream (kuroshiwo in Japanese) recalls the situation of the Amami Islands, squarely in the center of this largest and warmest of ocean currents. The warm ocean explains the semi-tropical climate, the erratically heavy rainfall with infrequent but serious droughts, and the presence of such trees as camphor, ebony, banyan, and pomegranate, as well as the luxuriant growth of cycads. Nurtured in such a place, one's beloved may well bloom gloriously!

Red nuts of the cycad that ripen in season,  
ripening red . . .

My love's come to her ripening, my sweet-  
heart's in bloom, In Ōshima grown.

In her beautiful form flows the grace of the  
Black Stream's dark waves,  
My heart thrills with true love, true love in  
my heart sings, Weaver of island pongee!

North wind every morning, south wind every  
night have caressed her . . .

On guard in the offing stands Tatigami,  
Rock of the Standing God--Waves over the  
shoals!

By night at her loom so skillfully weaving--  
oh sound of the loom!

To and fro it keeps throbbing like unending  
waves of the rhythm of love that beats in my  
heart!

Side II, Band 1: Rankan Bashi Bushi (SONG  
OF THE BRIDGE WITH THE RAILING)

Sung by Miss Umeno Tajima, jyabisen by Mr.  
Eikichi Kazari.

This is an old-time Amami folk song. During the rains a girl goes stealthily to meet her lover across the river. But the big bridge with the railing has been washed away. Alone and in tears she returns home.

The torrent has swept--

Yaare!

Swept away Rankan Bridge!

Sora yoi yoi!

Gone is the bridge with the rail!

Uma doshirareryuru.



Clandestinely she came

Yaare!

To meet her beloved--

Sora yoi yoi!

Gazing she stands--

Turns homeward in tears.

Side II, Band 2: TWO CHILDREN'S SONGS,  
for bouncing a ball (temari uta). Sung by  
Mr. Eikichi Kazari.

As in Japan Proper, Amamian children, especially girls, spend hours bouncing rubber balls. They become adept at bouncing them behind their backs, beneath alternate legs, and keeping steady count throughout intricate motions. Before rubber was known, girls made their own balls by winding waste silk tightly on a core of cycad floss. Everywhere in Japan children sing counting songs as they bounce balls; but the numerals in Amami dialect differ from those used in Japan Proper, and children have their own versions of the numbers.

Side II, Band 3: Ito Kuri Bushi (BROKEN  
THREAD), a Spinning Song. Sung, with  
iyabisen, by Mr. Eikichi Kazari.

If a thread breaks, one is scolded; but after  
all, it can be tied. What if one's love-thread  
should break?

Oh worry and dread--

Spinning anxiously . .

If by my fault the thread breaks

I'll be scolded and

Return home in tears--

Alas!

Still, a broken thread

May be tied again.

But should my love-thread break

Throughout eternity

There is no mending . .

Alas!

Side II, Bands 4,5: Two songs from  
Okiyerabu Island. Sung by Mrs. Yoshi  
Sakae, with hayashi and iyabisen by Mr.  
Yekimitsu Takeda; both from Okiyerabu.  
Ichikya Bushi--The old people ask the young  
men, "Do you know the old songs, such as  
Ikento Bushi (i.e., this song)? You should re-  
member them!"

Yerabu Nagkumo Bushi--The little white  
bird, chidori (plover), delights the people with  
its song.

Side II, Band 6: Umi no Sasakusa, another  
song of Yerabu. Sung by Mr. Yekimitsu  
Takeda.

Sasakusa is a seaweed in which fishes lay  
their eggs. "But I live in my mother's house,  
not in the sea; mother cherishes me in her  
bosom. The sasakusa faces shoreward--but  
my face turns toward my sweetheart!"

Side II, Band 7: Bon Odori, from Tokuno Is-  
land, Tete hamlet, Higashi Amagi Town. Sung  
by Mr. S. Nishiyama of Tokuno; iyabisen by  
the singer.



Pulling in a net, adults and children.

O Bon, the midsummer festival, is a time of  
fun and frolic. As in the European Hallowe'en,  
spirits of the departed revisit old haunts, but  
there is nothing of terror or eerie mystery in  
O Bon. The spirits are welcomed, places are  
set for them at a meal, and they are escorted  
to the river or sea and sent back to the land of  
shades. In Tete hamlet, young people don white  
head cloths and sing this song at each house.  
The householders offer them rice cakes (mochi),  
and afterwards the serenaders assemble, toast  
the mochi, dance, sing, and play. The custom of  
singing for mochi at festival times is generally  
practiced in the Amami Islands.

Side II, Bands 8-10: From the August Odori:  
Three dances at Nesebu Village.

Recorded as performed by the village people,  
December, 1951. Because I arrived in Amami  
Ōshima late in September, I had but one brief  
glimpse of a Hachigatsu Odori (August Dance)  
late in the season. Realizing the importance  
of these dances, I voiced to several persons  
my regret at having missed them. One day  
three unexpected visitors turned up: Mayor  
Takehara of Nesebu Village, and two members  
of his Village Council. They had heard of my  
interest in the Hachigatsu Odori; they suggested  
that if I really wanted to take movies and re-  
cord the music, the villagers would stage the  
August dances in broad daylight in December.  
So it happened that inaccessible Nesebu "put  
itself on the map." Ordinarily Nesebu is  
reached by sea only, but the people were labor-  
ing to construct a road to connect with Naze  
City. No electric power line reached their  
village, so the young men borrowed a heavy  
gasoline motor-generator to supply power for  
the tape recorder, and lugged it by hand across  
the mountain pass to the village over precarious  
trails. The only tape recorder then on Amami  
belonged to Mr. Jack Noland of the U. S. Army  
Civil Administration Team at Naze; fortunately,  
Colonel Wilson Potter, Commanding Officer of  
the Amami Civil Administration Team and



guest of honor of the village of Nesebu, kindly transported by launch Mr. Noland, the writer, and the sound and movie equipment. Well off-shore, Nesebu Bay is barred by a dangerous coral reef; a village fisherman was waiting in his dugout canoe, and he skillfully guided the launch through the tortuous channel to the beach.

Nesebu's people seized the occasion to celebrate the opening of the first segment of their new highway. From other villages we had heard that Nesebu dancers were exceptional and their repertory unique; this reputation proved to be well-merited. Thanks to Mr. Noland's recording in the face of difficult problems, this record presents excerpts from three of their dances. Like all of the recorded numbers, no special rehearsal or coaching occurred for the film and sound recordings; these are actual performances.

Bō Odori (STAFF DANCE): Unique in Nesebu, this ensemble pantomime dance by young men requires great skill and perfect coordination. The gaily costumed youths advance, clash staffs, turn, and repeat intricate maneuvers, singing lustily as they dance. For the second movement, razor-keen reaping hooks are substituted for the wooden staffs, and the slightest miscalculation or failure in timing would spell serious--perhaps fatal--injury. This dance appears to have been derived from south China by way of Okinawa in a long-forgotten past.

Hachigatsu Odori (AUGUST DANCES)--various excerpts: For the characteristic August dances, everyone forms a large circle; the rather simple but delicately graceful steps, turns, and hand postures are executed to the steadily increasing tempo of hand drums beaten by the older woman. Everyone--even the busy drummers and the ailing aged--dances, and the boys and men whistle shrilly through their teeth as the singing proceeds. This shrill whistling by the young men, interjected at traditional points in the songs, is typical of Ryūkyū dances; it is the sort of whistling that in the Occident may denote approval but more often indicates disapproval. In Okinawa and Amami it is part of the song; I remember with amusement the startled faces of a dignified Tōkyō audience at a formal program of Okinawan dances, when Okinawans in the hall enthusiastically provided the whistling. The present record gives excerpts from several dances. One song sung on this occasion was from Kikai Island:

KIKYAYAWAN DOMARI--(Kikai Bay needs water).

Kikya ya Wan domari  
Muji kugare to ryuri  
Hare ushuku ga hare to ryuru  
Yamada hirata yayon no  
Hare yamada hirata

Ame ni toyomareru nanatsu boshi miboshi  
Chigi ni toyomareru tonochi soshira!

#### Kikai Bay needs

Water-tis longed for, oh bring it!  
Hare--the blessing! Hare--oh bring it!  
Hill fields and flat fields,  
Hare! the hill fields, the flat fields!

In heaven abiding the Seven Stars shine,  
On earth abiding the people dwell.

These August dances include the entire village for many nights of the month. Young and old form a circle about a tripod bearing a torch, individuals join in and drop out as one song and dance succeeds another, and often continue till dawn. Children learn the steps and the fluid grace of the arm postures as soon as they can toddle. One family commented gleefully, "Grandpa is too feeble to walk, until the August dances; then he dances with everybody else!"

Te Odori (Hand Dances): Not strictly or solely dances of the August festival, these are stage performances by individuals or teams. Children do some te odori. Others are solo acts, and still others involve as many as a dozen performers. An orchestra of iyabisen, drums, and bamboo flute sits on the stage. Often verses are improvised with jibes at the expense of village notables; sometimes original pantomimes are presented. Tempo, melody, and dance forms exhibit a wide gamut of styles, for there are dozens of te odori. The one recorded here was performed by two dancers with orchestra and chorus.

#### MUSIC OF THE AMAMI ISLANDS, Japan

Recorded in Naze, Great Amami Island (Amami Ōshima), 1952, by Douglas G. Haring, as part of an ethnographic survey for the Pacific Science Board, National Research Council, Washington, D. C., with equipment generously provided by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. (Dances at Nesebu recorded in 1951 by Mr. Jack Noland of Amami Civil Administration Team, U. S. Army.)

Photographs by Douglas G. Haring  
Editor : Harold Courlander  
Production director : Moses Asch