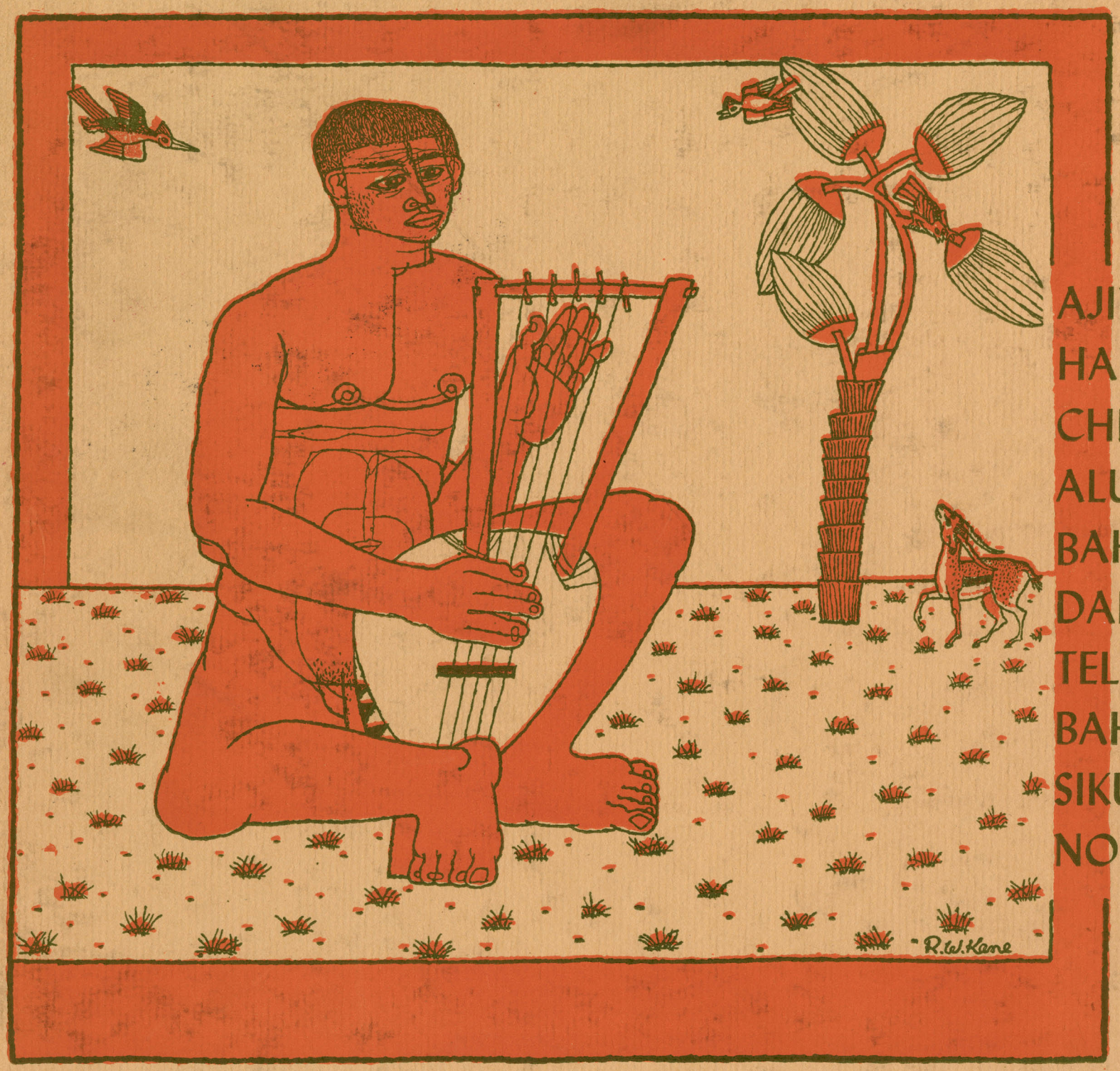


AJIN
HANJOI
CHINCHEM
ALUS
BAH SAIN
DALAM GUNI
TELEI BAH PEB
BAH MOTOH
SIKU
NOSE FLUTE

# TEMIAR DREAM MUSIC OF MALAYA

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS LIBRARY
P 460, 1-12" 33⅓ RPM Long Play
Recorded Under the Direction of H. D. Noone

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS LIBRARY Album No. P 460


# TEMIAR DREAM SONGS FROM MALAYA

Recorded by
the Malaya Broadcasting System

Foreword by E. D. Robertson

At the beginning of December, 1941, the Malaya Broadcasting Corporation dispatched its experimental mobile recording unit on its first expedition. The primary purpose of this expedition was to visit military camps in various parts of the Malay Peninsula in order to prepare recorded programs of interviews with British, Indian and Australian troops, commentaries of their activities, and concerts and entertainments arranged by the forces. The tour of the recording van was interrupted by the outbreak of the war with Japan, but the unit was successful in obtaining a number of desired recordings. Among them were these valuable recordings of the "dream" music of the Ple-Temiar aborigines who inhabit the central mountain range of Malaya.

The idea of recording this Temiar music was born some three months earlier, when I was in camp in the Perak jungle with D. H. Noone, Field Ethnographer, F. M. S. Museums, and Protector of the Aborigines, Perak. Noone had been studying the unique culture of the Temiar for many years, and he had been particularly impressed by the great part played by music and dance in the life of these people, and by the intimate connection between their music and dance forms and the shamanistic form of religion which dominated their spiritual life. He was acutely conscious of the need for a detailed investigation of their music to complement his general studies of Temiar culture. Noone had already had many requests from research workers in various countries for recordings of this music. At the same time, it was apparent that such recordings would be of value to broadcasting organizations in their educational work. Accordingly, I suggested to Noone that I might take the matter up with the Chairman of the Malaya Broadcasting Corporation, provided that Noone would undertake to make all arrangements for gathering together Temiar singers.

On my return to Singapore I broached the subject to Mr. Eric Davis, Chairman of the Malaya Broadcasting Corporation, who showed much interest in the proposal and agreed that these recordings should be made. Shortly after this discussion, the mobile recording equipment was ready for use, and plans were prepared for an extended tour of the Malay Peninsula. The itinerary of this tour included a visit to divisional headquarters and various army units stationed in the south of Kedah State. The route to this area passed through Upper Perak, a district in which Noone was then engaged in duties under the orders of Malaya Command, and it was agreed that advantage should be taken of this opportunity to record the Temiar music. I was able to give Noone two months advance notice of the probable date of arrival of the unit in upper Perak, and he immediately sent out messages throughout the country of the Temiar which resulted in the arrival of a dozen of their most famous singers at the appointed time and place two months later, some of the performers making journeys of over a hundred miles across jungle-covered mountains in order to keep the rendezvous.

The recording was carried out on the night of 3rd December, at Grik, a village in Upper Perak at the terminus of the road from Kuala Kangsar. This was the road-head nearest to the jungle territory of the Temiar. A long-house had been especially built for the performance and to house the Temiar. The recording presented many technical difficulties, as well as problems arising from the psychology of the Temiar themselves. The greatest difficulty was that of persuading them to sing to order. Normally, the Temiar will only sing and dance when they wish to summon their spirit guides to come down and possess them. In addition, singing and dancing go together. For technical reasons, however, it was essential that the performers should not dance while singing. No one but Noone could have persuaded the Temiar to sing under such conditions; Noone was, in fact, the only outsider in whose presence the Temiar would sing and dance willingly, and it was his remarkable influence with them that made recording possible.

The importance of this music from the stand-

points of the research workers in anthropology and music lies in the fact that it is the most direct expression of the "dream culture" of the Ple-Temiar group of Malayan aborigines. These Temiar inhabit the jungle-covered mountains of the Malayan main range. They are believed to represent the easternmost extension of the "brown race", modified by admixture with mongoloid, negrito and other elements. Their tongue has affiliations with the Mon-Khmer group of languages. They form small communities living in the river valleys in the Malayan main range, occupying long-houses similar in many respects to those of the Dyaks, practising a form of shifting cultivation, and satisfying their other needs by hunting with a blowpipe and poisoned dart, fishing and setting traps for game, and collecting the natural produce of the jungle. The material side of their life is, in its way, highly organized, and their enterprises are run on a co-operative basis. Temiar society is in fact a form of organization in which all the material requisites of living are shared by the community.

But behind the material form and function of their jungle surroundings the Temiar believe that a spiritual world exists, and it is this belief that maintains their interest in life and that reinforces the motives driving them in their co-operative enterprises. It is their manner of interpreting the heart of reality which transfigures the routine of their workaday world. The Temiar religion was at one time dismissed as a form of animism, but this bare formula has been proved inadequate.

The scene at a Temiar dance is a striking one. The dance takes place at night in a long-house. The house is in effect a whole village under a single roof. A typical long-house may be fifty yards long and twenty yards wide; it is raised perhaps fifteen feet from the ground on tree stumps and heavy timbers, and is constructed of timber and bamboo, the roof being thatched with palm leaves. The gable ends are left open to let out the smoke from the numerous fires and to admit the light of the moon and stars. In the centre is the spacious dancing floor of split bamboo, framed along the four sides by a score of separate family compartments, each screened off and opening on to a fire hearth of beaten earth. The blowpipes and spears of the hunters stand in deep baskets along the walls. The rhythm of the dance is first quietly given out by bamboos beaten by women, and then it is taken up by the deeper notes of the drum and the gong. Then a dozen dancers take the floor, and describe a circle in the measured steps of the dance. The springy bamboo floor yields to the leaping stamping dancers, and the entire long-house quivers with the rhythm of the dance. The dancers wear loin cloths of tree bark, green grass round their shoulders, waists and ankles, and long stiff leaves project from the girdles of grass round their waists; they carry wisps of a fragrant grass in their hands. The flare from the score of fires on the family hearths lights up the gloom and plays on the moving frieze of the dancers. The hala who is leading the dance increases the tempo and then suddenly leaps and stands stark in the centre of the entranced circle of dancers. The dance has been performed according to the dreamed instructions of the spirit guide, and the spirit has come to possess the hala. He stretches and bends with the power of it; he is in a state of grace, and is powerful to heal, or to pass on the spirit to the other dancers.

The dancing often goes on all night. It is recreational. The Temiar, after a hard day of hunting or working in their jungle clearings, will often begin dancing soon after the evening meal and continue until dawn, and yet be fresh for another day of arduous work. When they performed for the recording unit, the leading hala went into a trance, for some minutes remaining in a kneeling position; he then lept up, rushed to one of the fires and picked up glowing embers which he put into his mouth; he then rejoined the dancers, and danced around for some minutes with the red hot embers between his lips.

This is a people amongst whom inspiration is still a very living thing, and in nothing is this more apparent than in their music. The music of the Temiar is a vital part of their culture, intimately bound up with their religion, and constantly refreshed by the inspirations received by the halas and even by less gifted members of the community. For centuries the Temiar have been living in their isolated forest settlements, little affected by culture contact. In the field of anthropology, an appreciation of the form and function of Temiar music should do much to throw light on the elements which have combined in the past to produce the Temiar race and culture. It is for these reasons that the recordings made at Grik are so valuable, and their value in enhanced by the fact that it may be some time before Temiar music may be studied again or recorded.

## INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

By H. D. Noone

A casual traveller among the Temiar tribes who inhabit the jungle-covered mountains of the Malayan main range would readily observe the material side of their way of life. We would see that they planted dry padi and root crops in their clearings, and also that most of their material needs could be satisfied by collecting the natural produce of the jungle, or by hunting with the blowpipe, fishing and setting traps. It would not be so easy to find out how their interest in life is organized, or how the motives which maintain their co-operative enterprises are reinforced. In short, how there can be food for the spirit, as well as for the flesh, in such a way of living. Indeed, the routine of their workaday world is transfigured and inspired by the way they interpret the heart of reality.

Behind the material form and function of their jungle surroundings the Temiar, like most primitive peoples, believe that a spiritual world exists. The bare formula that the Temiar religion consists of a belief in spiritual beings, that is to say, animism, would, however, be inadequate. The Temiar religion, if it must have a label, is best described as "shamanism", a system which may be found among primitive peoples and peasants from Southeast Asia northwards across Siberia, and throughout North America and parts of South America. For, to the Temiar, the world of the spirits is not the exclusive domain of demons, ghosts and bogeymen. There are also spirits friendly to man, willing to be guides and guardians. The Temiar shaman, or hala, secures his sanction during dreams. In a hala dream, a special relationship is set up between the hala and a particular spirit, who promises to become his guide. These guides may be spirits from trees, crops, stones, mountains, wild animals or even ancestors. A spirit gives a revelation, according to a traditional tribal pattern, to the dreaming hala. A typical revelation includes a verse of poetry, music for song and dance, and an offering in the form of leaf and flower decorations to be worn by the performers. The hala can summon any of his spirit guides to come down and possess him by performing according to the special instructions, and during the performance he can pass on the spirit in possession to his fellow dancers.

Some spirit guides may only give advice on the hunt; others may give new art patterns for wood carvings or the plaiting of mats, or new songs and dances which are particularly recreational; others again may convey special powers by transfiguring the bodies of the dancers, so that they can withstand injuries and pain, and perform extraordinary feats. A few may endow the hala with the power of healing sickness; again, a very few spirit guides identify this with a messianic message affecting the welfare of the group or a tribe, or even mankind as a whole. Some of these master spirits can claim cosmic or universal significance. These spirit guides and inspirations are open to most Temiar men in the tribe. There are many small halas who can claim a few spirit guides, and a few big halas who can summon ten or more. To commune with these master spirits many strive, but few attain.

Religious ritual among the Temiar is singing and dancing for grace, or for power to heal, help or guide their neighbors. It is worth noting that among a people so co-operative in their way of living the only original and traditional idea of rank is the title of Tohat, an address of respect accorded by a man, who has been sick in body or soul, to the hala who has restored his health and peace of mind. A successful song or dance or poem was spread from valley to valley through the Temiar mountains, and each performance was given the name of the hala who dreamed it, suffixed by the name of the particular spirit guide.

The dream songs in this collection are sung by a people among whom inspiration is still very much a living thing. It is night in a Temiar long-house. The house is like a whole village under a single roof; in the centre is the dancing floor of split bamboo, framed along four sides by twenty separate family compartments, each screened off and opening on to a fire hearth of beaten earth. The rhythm from the bamboos beaten by the women is taken up by the deeper notes of the drum and gong. The dancers take the floor and the bamboos vibrate to the measured tread of their feet. The flare from a score of fires lights up the gloom and plays on the moving frieze of the dancers, wisps of fragrant lemon grass in their hands, plaited strands of gold green grass on their heads and round their shoulders, their waists and their ankles; the leading hala quickens the rhythm, and then he is stark in the middle of the magic circle. The spirit is in him, he stretches and bends with the power of it, like Laocoon in the coils of the serpent. He is in a state of grace, and powerful to heal.

SIDE I, BAND 1: BAH SAIN. From Telon in Pehang comes this song given to the hala Bah

Sain by the spirit of the wind among the bamboos. The song tells the Temiar that the wind in the bamboos is the force that moves airplanes they see flying in the sky.

SIDE I, BAND 2: HANJOI. Hanjoi is a play upon words based on the disappearing form of a man who has dived into a pool to catch fish. His body gets smaller until it disappears. This is a variation on the higher the fewer.

SIDE I, BANDS 3, 4 and 5: CHINCHEM. These three pieces are a portion of a cycle of songs which accompany a ritual dance called Chinchem, which is on the highest level of Temiar dream inspiration. The songs and dances were given to a chief on the Korbu River, in Perak, by an ancestor spirit. It is now the symbol of a new order of life growing out of the traditional tribal pattern.

SIDE I, BAND 6: SIKU. While the Temiar were helping to clear the jungles for the hill station of Cameron Highlands, the spirit of Siku Mountain warned the hala of the possible dangers of contact. The verse of the song runs:

White strangers come from Kuala Lumpur,
From Singapore they come
From Ipoh in their motor cars up the
Batang Padang,
But with them comes disease.

SIDE II, BAND 1: TELEI BAH PEB. This is a song from the Ulu Telon in Pahang. The spirit of the wild banana warns the hala that his group must make haste and collect the ripening fruits before the civet cat eats them.

SIDE II, BAND 2: BAH MOTOH. Up the Telon River outboard motor boats bring rice and supplies to the Chinese jelutong tappers. The spirit of the outboard motor appeared in a dream to the hala in that valley, and gave him a song and a dance.

SIDE II, BAND 3: DALAM GUNI. The spirit of the hills told a hala in the Ulu Perak that once upon a time a sack of rice was buried in the ground and a very rich plantation resulted.

SIDE II, BAND 4: AJIN. This song was given by a tiger spirit to a chief in the Ulu Nenggiri in Kelantan. Its message led his group to make a new settlement in Ajin, just over the border of the Cameron Highlands.

SIDE II, BAND 5: ALUS. The hala Alus in the Ulu Nenggiri in Kelantan dreamed this song when he and his group were felling trees and making a clearing for cultivation. The spirit of the tiger gave him a song because "we tigers here are amazed and not a little frightened of the power of your people -- you fell even the biggest trees. We leave you in peace and give you this song as a token."

SIDE II, BAND 6: NOSE FLUTE. This is an example of Temiar music played on the traditional nose flute.

Records from the Department of Anthropology
American Museum of Natural History, NYC.
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