

66/52

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AMM:bb

27th November 1974

Dr Habib H. Touma
International Institute for Comparative
Music Studies and Documentation
20 Winklerstrasse 1
BERLIN 33
WEST GERMANY

Dear Dr Touma,

At Dr Ucko's request, I am writing to acknowledge your letter of November 7 and to thank you for the return of the two master tapes, seven colour slides and typed notes, all of which have safely arrived.

We are also glad to have your assurance that a statement will be published on the disc jacket in accordance with the terms mentioned in Dr Ucko's last letter to you (66/52-10/10/1974).

Before preparing a new set of master tapes, our difficulties in complying with your request for 'complete pieces' of Australian Aboriginal music should be fully explained.

All 'open' (non-secret) Aboriginal music consists of relatively short songs (items) performed in succession. The length of the song sequence, or series, and the selection of items it contains, will vary according to a number of factors. Some song series recorded in the field contain more than 300 items. Even if the average duration of the items is no more than 30 seconds (some may last from 2-3 minutes), a song series may take well over two hours to perform. Few 'corroborees', or sets of song items performed for dancing, last for less than an hour. If edited, in order to conform with the playing time of an LP disc (40 minutes), they would necessarily become 'incomplete pieces'.

In preparing field recordings for general disc release, I have found it necessary not only to delete song items from a given series, but as far as possible, to delete conversations - some may be private - which occur between song items. As you will understand, such deletions are not easily made when one has to take into account the general level of background noise, as well as meaningful aspects of the performance.

Deletions of this kind are best done by someone familiar with Australian Aboriginal music and especially with styles of song item termination which can vary according to geographical region and to the occasion for which the song items have been selected.

In view of these matters, and unless I hear from you to the contrary, I shall proceed with the two-sided plan formulated as follows during our meeting in Perth last August:

- Side 1. To contain material only from the Rain Dreaming Ceremony.
- Side 2. To contain no more than two other styles of Australian Aboriginal song performance.

Yours sincerely

Alice M. Moyle
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