

Chapter 3

Analysis

This chapter demonstrates relationships between guitar tunings, associated playing techniques, and regional stringband styles. Firstly, it is necessary to show that guitar tunings have associated playing styles. Secondly, it needs to be demonstrated that these are significant factors in defining stringband styles. Finally, the issue of particular tunings and playing styles being used prominently in regionally described stringband styles needs to be shown.

Ideally, a detailed analysis of as many bands as possible in as many areas as possible would provide the most demonstrative results. However, the size of that task given the number of stringbands throughout the country is beyond the scope of this work. A detailed study is first required, and that involves analysis of the styles of individual guitarists within particular bands in certain places. While the conclusions to be drawn from such a limited scope may therefore be somewhat speculative, a start to this process in as much detail as possible offers the most stable base from which to formulate cogent arguments.

Coverage of a reasonable range of areas is important to the investigation of unique local PNG tunings and any relationships to regional stringband styles. The span chosen therefore ranges from the Central Province of the Papuan region, Madang province on the northern New Guinea coast and East New Britain Province in the New Guinea Islands area. The most obvious absence here is representation from the highlands region. One of the complexities with that area however, is the limited number of recordings and subsequent lack of public recognition of specific styles, save perhaps the distinctive sound of the Erave people in the Southern Highlands Province. No doubt that would provide a worthy project for the future, but is not included here.¹ Before describing the approach to be taken in analysing the musical material collected, the manner in which the collection was carried out must be considered to fully understand the analytical process devised.

¹Steven Feld described to me after a recent trip to the Bosavi region of the Southern Highlands Province numerous stringband songs he had recorded that featured very distinctive styles unique to the immediate area. At the time of writing analysis of that material had not been published.

The main period of fieldwork consisted of trips to the Hood Lagoon area of the Central Province and north coast of Madang town in the Madang Province from December 1996 to February 1997. Practical concerns of funding and time constraints did not allow a trip to East New Britain at that time. I was, however, able to visit the province as part of another research trip, and recorded some music on the Duke of York islands during a very brief visit there. The most valuable material relating to East New Britain guitar style was collected in Port Moresby in a series of rehearsals and workshops with well known East New Britain guitarist Anthony Taule, member of the popular Quakes band.

As a result of these slightly different approaches to the collection of material, there are some differences in selection of song corpus, though the analysis methodology is consistent throughout. Fortunately, one of the features of stringband repertoire is that most, and often all songs in a band's repertoire of a particular period tend to be very consistent in instrumental style, texture, tuning, rhythm, vocal texture, and even melodic structure in many cases. This makes selection of a corpus of representative songs more straightforward.

In Babaka, nine songs were recorded, of which three have been chosen for detailed analysis as being representative of the overall corpus. Examples from other songs, as well as recordings featuring some of the same musicians in a band from which the one recorded had developed, are drawn on to indicate more extensive use of the features described.

The East New Britain material starts by focusing on the detailed analysis of a single song chosen by Taule, a leading exponent of *faiv ki* in the area, as being representative. This is supplemented by other examples from the region. In 1998 I was fortunate enough to record a band from the nearby Duke of York Islands, and while the music is regarded locally as being from a different, though related style area, it introduces interesting comparative material and numerous similarities.

In Madang, a number of short visits to numerous villages were made.

The material recorded mainly consisted of reconstructions of older styles by musicians who met specifically to play these styles for this research. Some material from current bands was recorded, and a relevant selection has been made for analysis here. The material recorded during reconstructions of older styles definitely featured tunings that played an important role in both the description and recognition of guitar style, though the number of different tunings, sometimes in the same group and song simultaneously, offered a complicated though revealing set of relationships that inform a better understanding of the notion of *ki* as it relates to stringband guitar style. This will be discussed in a separate section following analysis of some of the more recent material.

3.1 Analysis technique

Throughout the analyses, the same basic procedure has been followed. This consists of firstly describing the overall texture of the band as revealed by the corpus chosen. The fact that instrumental texture and role is so constant throughout the repertoire of most stringbands (and certainly of all those recorded here) assists in this process. Secondly, the lead guitar part is isolated. Thirdly, that part is analysed in detail with regard to the nature of the tuning used, including the intervals between strings and relationships to the diatonic scale and chords in the key in which the songs are performed. The phrases are then analysed by breaking them down into essential figures. This part of the analysis introduces the relationship between guitar technique and those phrases. By guitar technique I mean where and how the notes are played on the guitar. This is also linked to the structure of the tuning, as that determines the initial set of possibilities for note placement. Those phrases and figures are then compared within songs to extract similarities and differences. A series of graphs is then constructed from selected, representative phrases to get a better kinetic understanding of the way the phrases are played on the guitar. Other techniques such as counting note

frequency to analyse what I describe as the tonal or pitch palette, as well as fretboard diagrams are used to further illustrate important points.

Comparison of material from the same band is then made where relevant, before widening the comparison to music from the same area, and commercial recordings where available. The final conclusions are deduced by comparing the analysis results across the different areas studied.

3.2 Terms

A number of terms are used throughout this and later chapters that refer to guitar technique and musical analysis that need to be clarified before proceeding.

Chord tone Notes that are part of a chord. The term is generally used to describe the relationship between notes in a melodic line and the chords over which they are played.

Diatonic Using notes of the major or minor scale only.

Figure A smaller musical unit than a phrase, up to a couple of bars in length. Used here to refer to short melodic units that make up a phrase.

Open position Description of the left hand² playing position on a guitar where the left hand is closest to the nut (where the fret-board meets the head of the guitar).

Open and non-standard tunings The interval relationships between guitar strings (with string 1 as the highest in pitch, and string 6 as the lowest) when tuned differently to standard tuning. Strictly speaking, open tunings refer to those where a chord is sounded when all strings are played in open position (not fretted). Non-standard tunings refer to the rest.

²All references to the left and right hand of a guitar player presumes that the right hand plucks or strums the strings, and the left hand frets notes on the fret-board.

Open string A guitar string played without fretting a note along the fret-board.

Position when used in relation to the left hand of the guitar player, this means where the left hand is positioned to play a particular note, passage, or longer musical phrase. The term is prefixed with a number to indicate which fret the first, or index, finger of the left hand is positioned against. For example - the fifth position means that the index finger of the left hand is positioned over the fifth fret (and the remaining fingers are poised over the sixth, seventh and eighth frets).

Standard tuning The most commonly found guitar tuning (certainly in Western and popular music anyway) where the strings of the guitar are tuned to the notes E, A, D, G, B, E; from the lowest (sixth) to highest (first) string respectively.

3.3 Local stringband nomenclature

Despite the fact that stringband music is very rarely, if ever, written down and notated, a system of verbal communication between musicians has developed. Although this may vary slightly between different areas, the most important terms will be discussed here.

The term *ki* is most commonly used to describe different tunings as interval relationships between strings, irrespective of their exact pitch. It can also be used to describe pitch or key centre, paralleling its use in Western music theory, such as the discussion of *C ki* and *G ki* within the tuning *faiv ki* will demonstrate later. As a result of distinctive styles which have developed in association with these tunings, the term also tends to connote style. People often talk of Samoan style or Samoan *ki* interchangeably. The same applies to *faiv ki*, it can be either the tuning itself, or a reference to style, depending on the context in which it is used. This complexity of meaning will be explained by the analyses, particularly those involving *faiv ki* that

follow.

Webb (1995, pp. 425-8) summarises some of the most essential aspects of nomenclature relating to chord names in ENBP, and these are commonly used in many other parts of PNG. The primary chords I, IV and V are called *wan*, *tu*, and *tri* (Tok Pisin for one, two and three) respectively. Chord II is called *flet*, Tok Pisin for flat; and chord vi I have heard described as *maina*, meaning ‘minor’ in Tok Pisin. Amongst most stringband musicians, knowledge of flat and minor as it relates to musical theory in a broader sense is largely unknown. Students in my music theory classes over the last few years have suggested this, and have actually expressed some fairly deprecatory views about the local theory and its relationship to Western music knowledge. This, in my experience, is not uncommon amongst university students in PNG, and unfortunately tends to divert attention from a particularly interesting area.³

Terms to describe the form of songs, such as verse and chorus, in some cases mirror their Western counterparts. The most widely understood local term is the description of the opening instrumental section as *step* (Webb 1995, p. 427). Although this section was present in almost every song I recorded, younger musicians were more likely to refer to it as an introduction or solo, though they all understood *step* when I discussed it with them. The preference for English words and Western musical terms perhaps reflects the status of these in relation to their local counterparts. This, I think, is a very good example that supports the self-deprecatory attitude towards local music, and particularly stringband music that Webb (1993, p. xix) describes.

3.4 Samoan *ki* and the Hood Lagoon area

Papua New Guineans describe a Central Province stringband style, but go further than that and talk about a ‘Samoan’ style as well. Since Samoan is the name of the tuning, and has no other meaning in the musical context,

³This is probably as much the fault of teachers such as myself in a system that still tends to foreground Western, over Papua New Guinean musical styles.

this seems to infer that the guitar style is a significant factor in differentiating it from other Central Province styles. An anecdote from a recent trip to Irupara village in the Hood Lagoon area illustrates this concept. Late one evening sitting on the verandah of the house I was staying at, I was playing guitar while one of the villagers rostered as village security during the Christmas period sat nearby and listened. As soon as I started playing an accompaniment pattern in Samoan that I had picked up from listening to players in nearby Babaka, he commented immediately that he would rest while listening to some Samoan. The fact that he recognised the sound immediately (despite my somewhat non-local fumbling at the style), and described it as Samoan, reinforced for me the notion that style is strongly linked to the Samoan tuning and the way it is played - the repeated figures and phrases that players build an accompaniment from.

In 1982 a band called the BB Kings formed in Babaka village in Central Province. The name is a play on the name of the village and the American blues guitarist and singer. The word play comes about through the common practice in PNG of concatenating words by removing the vowels and referring to the resultant acronym-like word. For example, neighbouring village Irupara, is often referred to as IRP (each letter pronounced as in an acronym) or IRPR. BBK is commonly used to refer to Babaka village. This has been extended in Babaka to BB Kings, and sporting teams are commonly known by this in competitions outside the village, such as local area tournaments or those in Port Moresby.

Recently, younger relatives of BB Kings band members started a group called the Young BB Kings, who have continued in the same style, performing original BB Kings songs and their own compositions. Although in their commercial recordings the Young BB Kings tend to use electric instruments such as electric guitars, bass and keyboard, when playing in the village acoustic instruments are much more common.⁴

I recorded nine songs in Babaka village in December 1996. These were

⁴Villages in this area have no power other than that provided by a few privately owned portable generators.

performed by a mixture of original BB Kings, and Young BB Kings members. The lead guitar in all of the examples recorded used the Samoan tuning. Samoan consists of the strings being tuned to scale degrees 4, 5, 1, 5, 1, and 3 (from the lowest to highest strings respectively) of a major key. This coincided closely with the key of A for the recordings, the strings therefore being tuned to the notes D, E, A, E, A, and C♯.

Three songs have been chosen for analysis here as they are representative of the larger corpus through consistency of form, texture, harmony and the clarity and prominence of the Samoan tuned guitar part. A rich three and four part vocal texture accompanied by several guitars and a ukulele characterises the BB Kings style. The vocal style of the BB Kings is similar to that of *ute*⁵ and on a commercial album of the Young BB Kings two unaccompanied *ute* are present as well as guitar and ukulele accompanied songs.⁶ Webb (1993) describes their style as featuring:

rapid, ascending lead guitar melodic fills (firmly rooted in the Central Province style) and expertly blended three and four-part harmonies. (p. 44)

While the rapid semiquaver ascending runs played by the standard tuned guitar that Webb refers to are a contributing factor to the definition of Central Province guitar style, bands without such a lead part are still recognised and described as being in the Central stringband style. In an interview in Babaka in December 1996, BB Kings band member Gele Leana described that they had two guitarists considered as lead players, one guitar in standard tuning, and the other in Samoan. The guitar in standard tuning played prominent solo lead lines, while the Samoan tuned guitar played rapid arpeggio figures characteristic of much stringband music in the area. The addition of such a part to the ensemble tends to be more common where a band has

⁵ *Ute* is a secular vocal polyphonic style originally introduced by Polynesians in the early 20th century. Originally unaccompanied, since the 1960s it has sometimes been accompanied by guitars and ukuleles.

⁶ *Young B.B. Kings*, 1992, Young B.B. Kings, NBC CS 93. *Ate Ate* and *Avurigo Veugana* are the *ute* referred to.

an accomplished lead guitar player capable of such melodic invention. The Samoan tuned guitar is a more common component of stringbands in the area, and can therefore be said to play a more fundamental role in the definition of style. For these reasons, it is the guitar part played by Gele Leana in Samoan tuning that will receive the main attention in the subsequent analysis. Before moving to that however, I will summarise the main formal and textural features of the songs.

The songs are strophic, do not have chorus sections, and start with either solo lead guitar or ukulele, followed by rhythm guitars. These passages end with a repeated figure over the tonic chord before singers enter with the first verse. There are three or four verses, each of which is sung twice in succession. The final phrase of the last verse is sung twice on the repeat, before a brief instrumental coda ends the songs.

Generally the vocal texture has two or three parts at the beginning of phrases, and thickens at the ends of phrases where two singers singing the same part branch to different notes. The main harmonic areas are the tonic, tonic with added minor seventh, subdominant, dominant and occasionally sub-mediant chords. The most prominent voice is usually that of the uppermost part and is largely sung in falsetto. The musicians I have spoken to in this area do not seem to distinguish between lead and backup (or harmonising) vocal parts. The main term used to describe melody is *tiuni* which is simply a local version of the English word tune. All parts are described as singing the *tiuni*, despite variations in melodic lines. Each singer chooses a note of the chord that suits his particular range, and the tune progresses in close harmony, mainly moving in parallel motion. Rhythmic elaboration and brief passages of subtle melisma are confined primarily to the upper voice. The vocal texture has a fluid rhythm generated by melodic movement over vowels as well as consonants, which contrasts with the clear articulation and metrical precision of the ukulele and guitar parts.

The ukulele usually enters a few bars into the guitar solo introduction,

though in some songs actually played the introductory solo. Precisely metrical, syncopated chords are strummed using a short, single strand cut from a coconut frond held between the thumb and index finger of the right hand as a plectrum. The rapid, semiquaver based figures rely on a movement generated by the wrist, with the elbow remaining fairly static. A combination of left hand damping and strength of strumming attack determines the resultant rhythmic pattern. The upper-most note is heard as the most prominent part of the ukulele part and outlines a syncopated melodic line through changes in chord voicing. The songs that start with the ukulele feature dynamic, complex syncopated introductions that may delay perception of the main pulse for several bars.

The rhythm guitar sets up the main pulse or beat with a dotted crotchet-quaver rhythm. The quaver (an up-stroke strum on the guitar) is often weak to the point of being inaudible on the recording, but my observation of the performance indicates that it is actually played. A minor seventh is added to the I chord, strengthening the move to chord IV, and this occurs in the ukulele and lead guitar parts.

The lead guitar starts with a solo, and then continues with similar, though slightly simpler phrases throughout the piece, coming into prominence when the voice drops out between repeats of verses. Guitarist Gele Leana played lead guitar for the recording session. His playing involved fingerpicking bass notes with the thumb and alternating this with fingerpicking by the index and second fingers of the right hand. In two of the pieces, Leana starts the songs with a lead introduction section, before settling into less elaborate phrases, still picked, when the voices enter. Three songs - *Tariku tariku*, *Vegalo vavine* and *Rele kele* - clearly demonstrate the features described so far and have been chosen from the recordings for detailed analysis.⁷

⁷These are included on the accompanying recording as examples one, two and three respectively (see page 144).

The transcription consists of four staves, one for each guitar string (C, A, E, D) from top to bottom. Each staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. Measure numbers 1 through 14 are indicated above the staves. Below each staff are the corresponding fingerings for each note. The strings are tuned C-G-D-A. The notation shows a variety of arpeggiated patterns and single-note bass lines.

Figure 3.1: *Tariku Tariku*: solo transcription

3.4.1 *Tariku tariku*

The Samoan tuned guitar starts this song, with rhythm guitars and a ukulele joining in gradually through the opening few bars. The Samoan tuned guitar is most prominent in the opening instrumental section which lasts for 14 bars and has been transcribed in figure 3.1. The guitarist picks bass notes on the sixth, fifth, fourth and occasionally third strings with the thumb, and picks higher notes on the third, second and first strings with the index and middle fingers of the right hand. The result is a series of arpeggio-like figures, with alternation between fingers and thumb providing a rapid, mainly semiquaver based line.

Although figure 3.1 is adequate from a guitarist's perspective - the series of notes played one after another reflecting the way a player would at least

learn the phrases - it does not reflect the way the passage actually sounds. A distinct melodic line is evident, many of the notes on the second and third strings are played quietly and tend to provide a harmonic and rhythmic fill, while the bass notes tend to be masked by the chords played by other guitars. This is best demonstrated where the thumb and finger picked notes are separated into two separate voices. This has been done in figure 3.2, which presents the same passage with the part picked by the fingers in the upper voice (stems up), and those picked by the thumb in the lower voice (stems down).

The melody features extensive syncopation and wide leaps between adjacent notes. Many of the inner notes on the second and third strings are played very quietly, however, which tends to smoothen the broader melodic line marked by more distinctly accented notes on the higher strings. The highest notes of this accented line mark the most important structural points of the melody, and the placement of these are very similar in both phrases.

This second transcription shows that there are two main phrases in the passage; from bar 1 to half way through bar 7, and from the last half of bar 7 through to bar 13. At the end of the solo there is a series of simpler figures that reinforce the tonic chord before the singing enters. The highest notes stand out most clearly and provide the main structural points of the melodic line. The harmonic structure is identical for the two phrases, and the primary melodic points are similar. The main differences occur in the starting figures (bar 1 compared to the last half of bar 7, for example) and the detail of the inner string figures (largely notes on the second and third strings in this example), and slight differences in rhythmic placement of the principal melodic notes.

The phrases can be broken down into one bar figures. The shape of these is generally arched, as a result of the bass note at the beginning of the bar, followed by a combination of arpeggio fragments and undulating four semi-quaver groups. The highest points are usually the accented main structural notes mentioned previously, and these tend to occur most frequently on the

The transcription consists of five horizontal staves. The top staff is a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps. The bottom four staves represent a six-string guitar, with the top three being the treble strings (E, A, D) and the bottom three being the bass strings (B, G, D). Measure numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 are indicated above the staff. Various performance techniques are marked, including slurs, grace notes, and dynamic changes (e.g., \bar{p} , $\bar{\bar{p}}$, $\bar{\bar{\bar{p}}}$). The guitar tablature below each staff shows the fingerings for each note.

Figure 3.2: *Tariku Tariku*: solo transcription with parts split

second and third crotchet beats before descending again. Bars 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12 tend to have full bar arches, while bars 4, 10, and 13 have two smaller half bar arch shapes. Bars 5 and 7 combine ascending and arch shaped figures.

While learning to play these examples, and from playing Samoan with local musicians in the area, it is clear that figures played over the same chord are similar in that they use notes from particular places on the fretboard, involve similar right hand picking technique, and feature similar broad melodic shapes. This can be demonstrated by comparing single bar figures played over the same chords.

Looking at the figures that occur over chord A, those that occur in bar 2 and 8 are prior to a change to chord IV (D).⁸ Both have an identical rhythmic structure, and the last two beats are almost exactly the same. Figures at bars 4 and 10 are also similar, the last beat being exactly the same. These are figures that occur before moving to an chord V. Bass notes every two crotchet beats occur most of the time and the general arpeggio shape and bass pattern is common to all of these figures. The figures over the chord IV are almost identical though they only occur twice in the first twelve bars. The figures occurring over chord V at bars 5 and 11 are the most elaborate. Further examples drawn from the next song will demonstrate that this elaboration over chord V is a common feature, and assists as a cue for other musicians at essential cadence points.

While tablature provides a certain degree of guitar based information about playing location on the fretboard, a more graphic representation provides a better view of the kinetics of guitar playing. I have devised a method of graphing tablature notation in three dimensions. While there is no extra data in these graphs than that contained in the combination of musical notation and tablature, their advantage lies in the more obvious illustration

⁸From here on, roman numeral notation will be used to refer to chords, as all songs from the one band are in the same key. Chord changes are indicated by the first bass note in each bar, hence the lack of chord symbols.

of guitar playing technique through the projection of fret-board (playing position) information to the y-axis of a polar coordinate graph. The x-axis represents time in semiquavers, the z-axis represents each string and the y-axis the fret being played (notated in the tablature as a number on a line representing the appropriate string). Features which these graphs illuminate include similarities between phrases when they are played successively in the same way on the guitar, physical movement of the left hand, the note pool or selection of notes in a certain pitch area and position on the fret-board, and the frequency of the use of open notes in relation to fretted notes. Figure 3.3 is provided for orientation and represents a descending chromatic scale on the first string, followed by an ascending chromatic scale on the fourth string.

Figures 3.4 and 3.5 are direct graphical transcriptions of the *Tariku tariku* opening solo transcribed in figure 3.1. The prominence of open notes, a limited subset or note pool from which the player selects, and only one note outside of the open position are the most obvious characteristics. The limited vertical range (largely only up to the third fret) indicates that the player stays in the open position. Strings four, five, and six are only used to play open notes and there are only one or two different fretted notes used on the top three strings. By presenting the phrases previously discussed in a manner other than notation and tablature these graphs give a more technique centred perspective on the nature of the Samoan figures and reinforce the notions of phrase similarity over particular chords, an open position orientation with a significant use of open notes, and a limited set of fretted pitches used in that position.

Such similarities are not surprising given that the second phrase can be described as a varied repeat of the first, but the same sort of phrases and relationships of similarity between figures played over the same chords applies elsewhere. Similar, though slightly simpler picked figures continue throughout the verses. At the ends of verses these figures become more prominent in the texture, and tend to be as elaborate as those from the opening solo. Some of these have extracted and transcribed in figure 3.6.

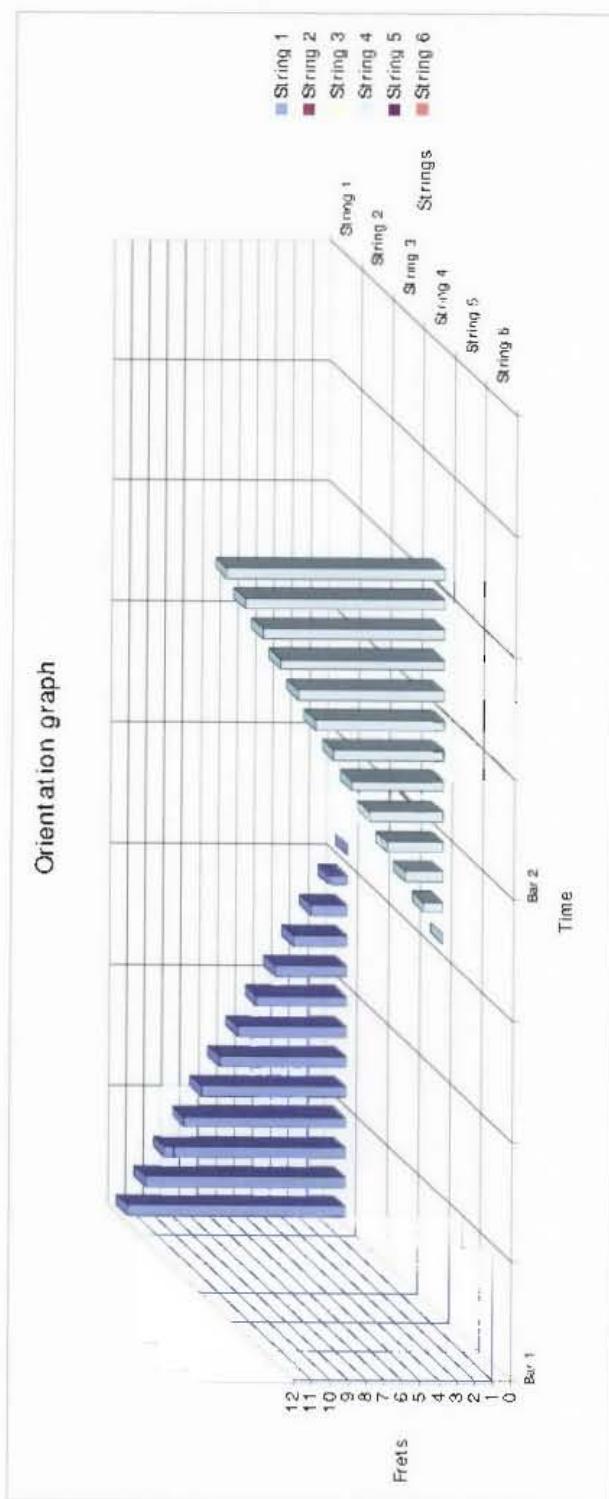


Figure 3.3: Orientation graph: descending chromatic scale on the first string, then ascending chromatic scale on the fourth string

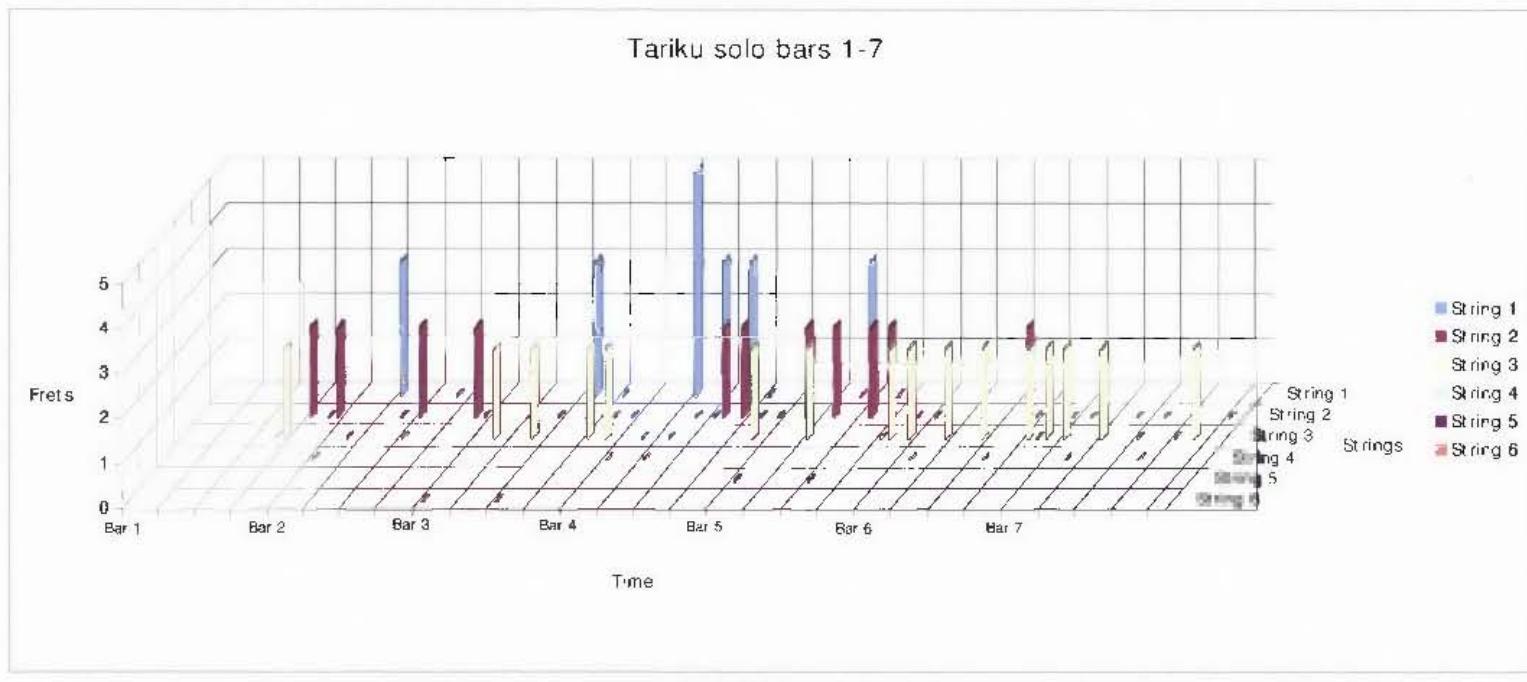
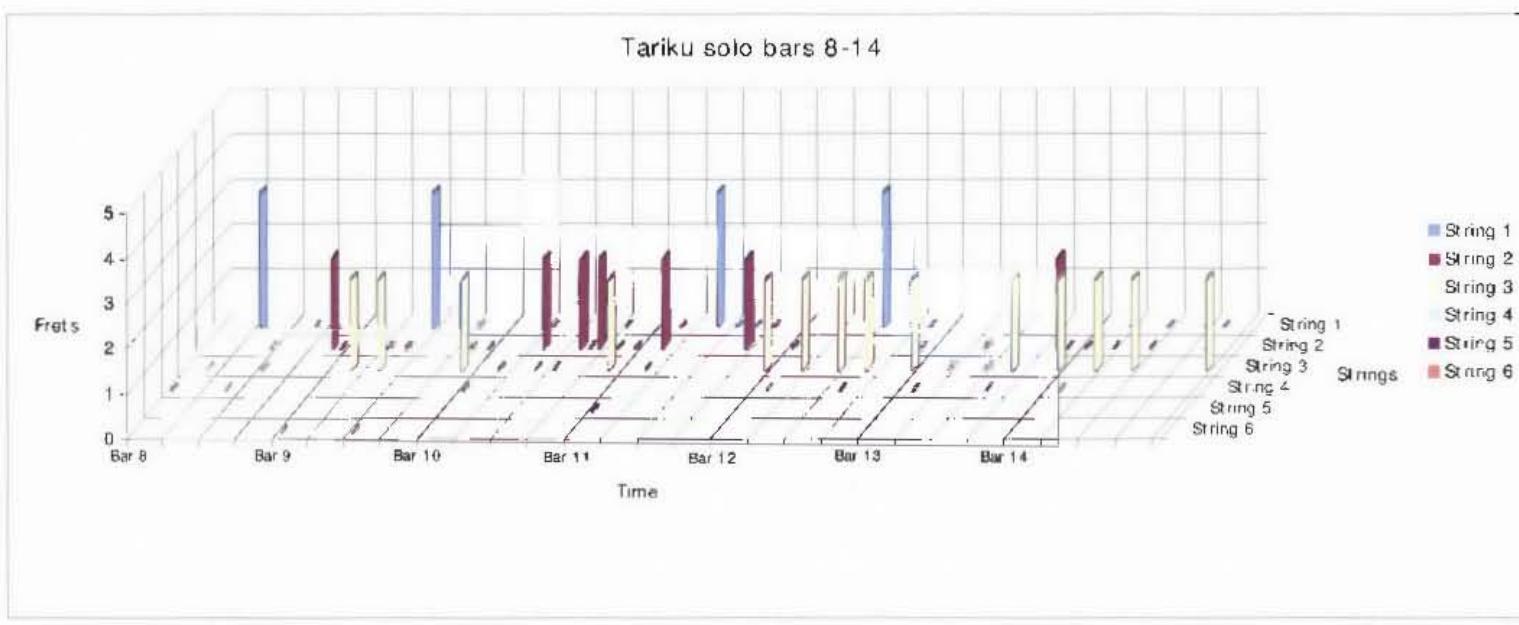
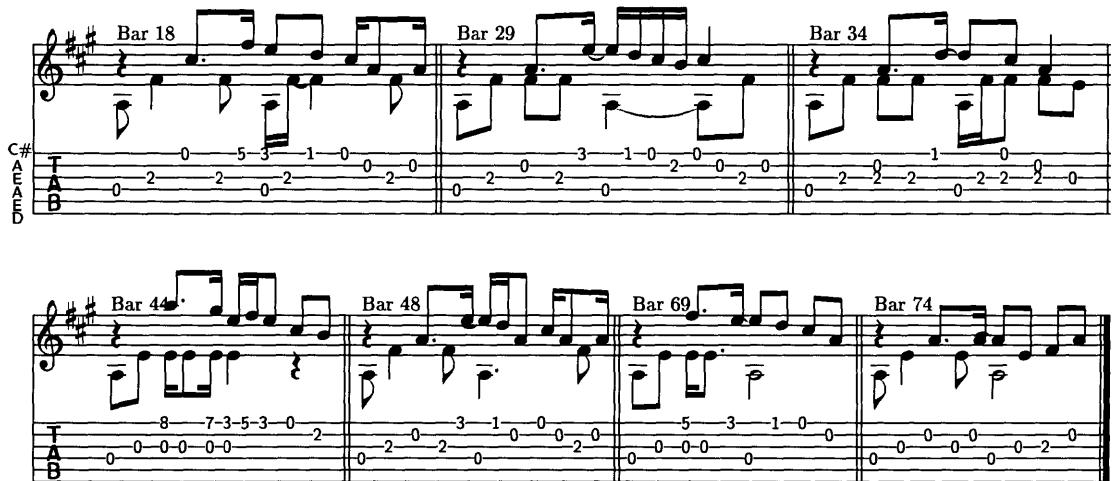
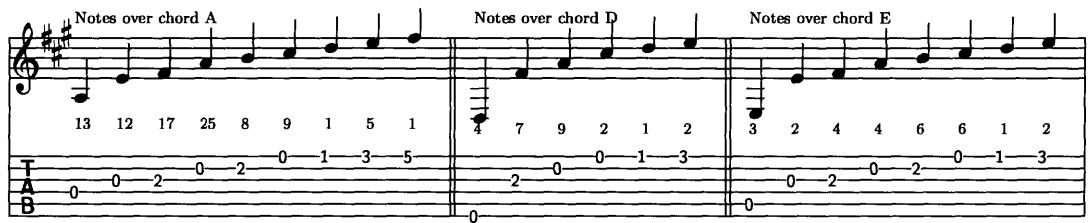


Figure 3.5: *Tariku Tariku*: graph of solo (bars 8-14)



Figure 3.6: *Tariku Tariku*: figures accompanying versesFigure 3.7: *Tariku Tariku*: tonal palette and note frequency

Each basic set of figures over each chord is built from the same pool of notes. These are played in the same place on the fretboard. Variations are played by different right hand picking order, and the selection and order of the main upper notes of the note pool. The frequency with which particular pitches occur in the solo has been summarised in figure 3.7.

Sixth and ninth degrees of the chords form an essential part of the harmonic and melodic texture. There is an almost complete absence of the 7th degree (G \sharp) in the lead guitar part, and minimal use of it in the melody (just a couple of times as quick unaccented passing notes). Open notes constitute 62% of the notes used, and chord tones are predominant. The remaining

38% mainly come from a small subset of pitch possibilities. Certainly for this song, open notes, common phrase shapes, and similarity of phrases over particular chords are significant features. Similar features can be observed in other songs in this corpus as the following analysis will demonstrate.

3.4.2 *Vegalo vavine*

Vegalo vavine also starts with a solo introduction and this is transcribed into the two resultant voices in figure 3.8. Similar figures to those found in *Tariku tariku* are immediately evident. The solo starts with a seven bar phrase, which is then repeated with some variation before settling to a simpler repeated figure before the singing starts. The figure at bar 16 is similar to the end phrase from *Tariku tariku* in its simpler, syncopated quaver structure. This provides the aural cue from which the singers start, and its repetition provides stability to emphasise that role. Evidence for this phrase acting as a cue comes from comparing the use of such a figure in this song from my experience playing with stringbands. It is common for the lead guitar to start, and then settle down to a repeated figure that is recognised by other players and singers as being the point from which to start the first verse. Figures featuring the same function will be shown to exist in other examples analysed later.

The shape of the main melodic line, marked by the accented highest notes of the upper voice is essentially descending, starting on an A, and moving gradually down an octave to the repeated A's in bar 7. Once again the figures played over a particular chord are similar. Looking at the bars which occur over chord I, (bars 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14) the most obvious similarities are the ascending and descending arpeggio shape and similar rhythmic patterns. The main melodic notes are brought out by playing them more loudly than the surrounding notes.

Over chord IV are the figures at bars 3 and 4. Bars 10 and 11 are similar, with only minor rhythmic and melodic variation. The figures at bars 3 and 10 use similar rhythmic patterns to that used in bar 15 over chord I before

The transcription consists of five staves of musical notation for guitar, with tablature provided for each staff. The staves are arranged vertically, corresponding to the strings of the guitar: C# (top), A, E, A, and D (bottom). The notation includes measures numbered 2 through 15, with measure 1 implied by the start of staff 1. Measure numbers are placed above the staff or below the tablature. The music is in common time, with a key signature of two sharps (F major). The tablature shows fingerings and dynamic markings such as p (piano) and f (forte).

Staff 1 (C# string):

2	0 8 0 0 7 0 5 0 3
3	0 3 5 0 0 0 0 2 0 0
4	0 2 0 3 2

Staff 2 (A string):

2	0 0 0 0 2 0
3	0 0 0 0 2 0
4	0 0 2 0 2 4 0

Staff 3 (E string):

2	3 0
3	5 3 0 2 0
4	0 0 2 0 2 0

Staff 4 (A string):

2	5 0 0 5 0 5
3	0 8 0 5 0 8 7 0 5
4	0 3 5 0 0 2 0 0

Staff 5 (D string):

2	2 0 2 2 2 0
3	2 3 2 0 2 2 2 0
4	0 5 5 3 0 0 2 0 2 0

Staff 6 (B string):

2	0 0 2 0
3	0 2 4 0
4	0 2 0 2 0

Staff 7 (B string):

2	0 0 2 0
3	0 2 0 2 0
4	0 2 0 2 0

Figure 3.8: *Vegalo vavine*: solo transcription

the singing starts. The rhythmic patterns and overall shapes of the figures at bars 4 and 11 are comparable to fragments from figures at bars 6, 7, and 13.

Examining the tonal palette or note pool as for *Tariku Tariku*, the similarities are quite striking. The proportion of open notes, at 60% is very close, and the pitch subset that the phrases consist of matches closely. Figures 3.9 and 3.10 graphs the opening solo of *Vegalo vavine*. Comparison between these graphs, and those of *Tariku Tariku* graphed previously (figures 3.4 and 3.5) indicate that, in general, figures over the same chord are played in the same positions and draw on the same pool of pitches. This is indicated by the same height bars on the same strings between the different graphs. The *Vegalo vavine* solo, however, occasionally extends to using notes as high as the tenth fret, so the vertical axis is compressed accordingly.

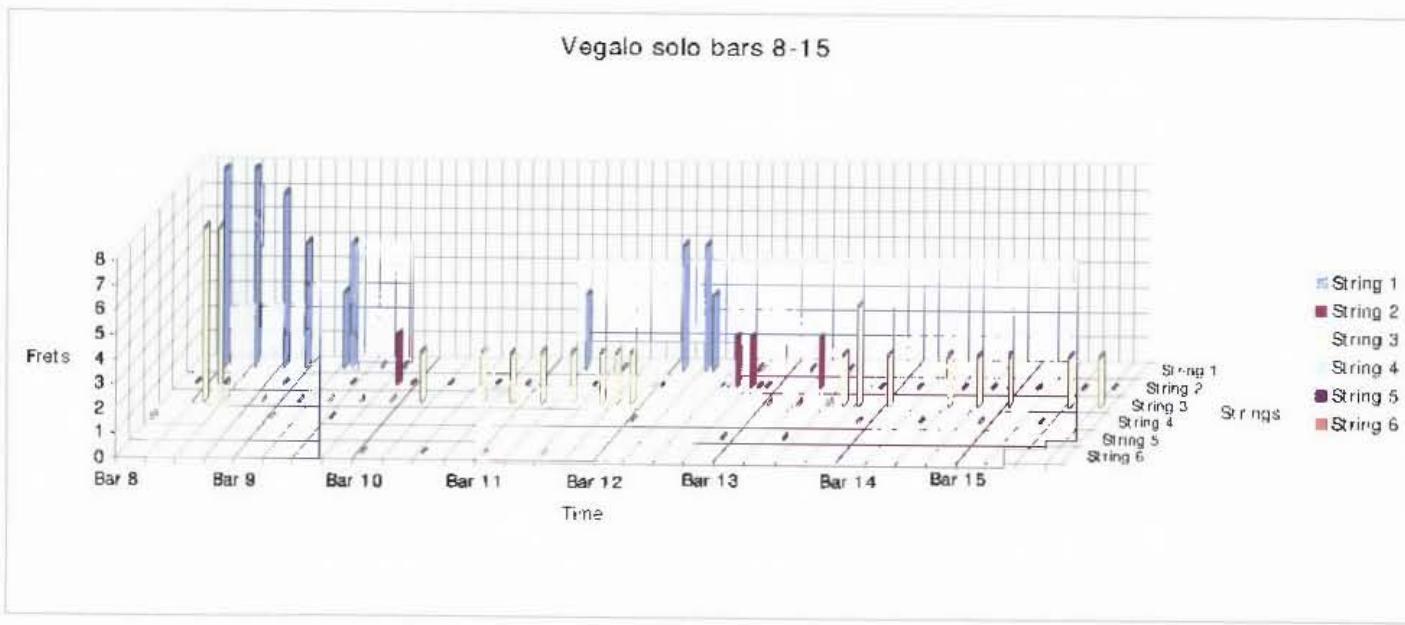
Some selected figures that accompany the singing have been transcribed in figure 3.12. Similar, though slightly simpler phrases are again used during the verse and between verses, where they are more prominent in the texture, and tend to be slightly more elaborate, more like those found in the opening solo. The left hand generally remains in the first, or open position, other than a couple of times where the hand moves to the third and fifth positions to play the high melodic notes. The left hand tends to select from a set of notes on particular fret and string combinations.

Not all of the songs start with a solo by the Samoan tuned guitar. In such songs however, the Samoan guitar plays accompaniment figures similar to those seen in the two songs analysed so far. *Rele kele* starts with a ukulele playing an extended syncopated phrase before the other guitars, then the singers enter. Some of the most common accompaniment phrases have been transcribed in figure 3.13 to show this. This highlights the fact that the Samoan tuned guitar is important as an accompanying instrument, and that these phrases are an important contribution to the texture.

Figure 3.9: *Vegalo* navine: graph of solo (bars 1-7)



Figure 3.10: *Vegalo vaino*: graph of solo (bars 8-15)



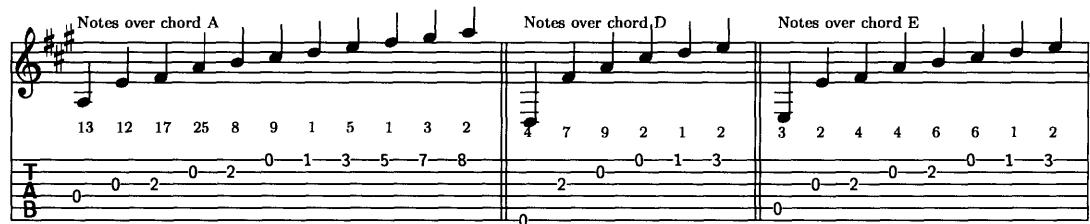
Figure 3.11: *Vegalo vavine*: solo note frequencyFigure 3.12: *Vegalo vavine*: rhythm figures



Figure 3.13: *Rele kele*: extracted rhythm guitar parts

3.4.3 Other examples

The examples analysed so far exhibit a range of similarities in phrase shape, rhythmic structure, tonal or pitch palette, and the way in which the phrases are played on the guitar. While this is useful as a starting point, some brief examples from a wider repertoire are taken to assist the comparative process.

Similar Samoan phrases are found in the commercial recordings of the BB Kings. Samoan extracts from *Ulamagi gena vevaina* recorded in 1982 on the *Nori e Dear o* (NBC B193) album have been transcribed in figure 3.14. These demonstrate significant similarities to the Samoan phrases previously discussed.

Samoan is used more widely than just the Hood Lagoon area, and the following transcriptions of stringband music recorded by Don Niles in the Motu speaking village of Boera (to the West of Port Moresby) indicate this. Figures 3.15 and 3.16 are transcriptions of the opening Samoan tuned passages from *Lalokau eda ura na seme maoro* and *Sore KD* respectively, recorded by Niles in 1980 and demonstrate the predominant use of mainly open notes, the repetition of a series of rhythmic patterns in an arpeggio shape, and use of the same fretboard position and note selection as demonstrated previously.

Figure 3.14: *Ulamagi gena vevaina*: extracted phrases

Figure 3.15: *Lalokau eda ura*: opening phrase

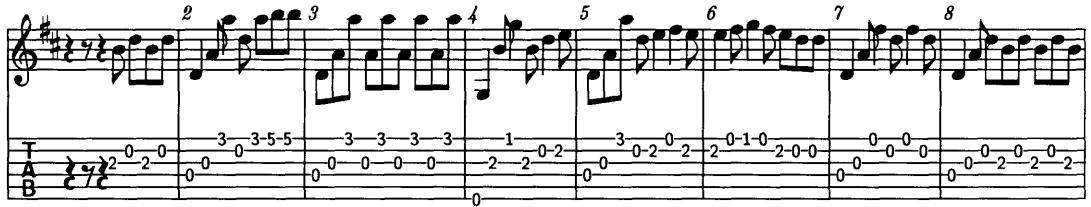


Figure 3.16: *Sore KD*: opening phrase

Both of these examples utilise the open position, the bass note then ascending and descending arpeggio shape. Though the tonal centre is different as these are in the key of D, and the guitar is tuned higher accordingly, the figures over the primary chords used are played using the same fret positions as in the previous examples. This is most clearly seen by comparing the tablature fret and string combinations between the different Samoan transcriptions.

To summarise the analysis so far, a comparison of the Samoan examples reveals a number of similar features. The phrases are made up of a series of one bar figures that feature principally arched shapes covering an ambitus of about two and a half octaves. A melodic line is clearly enunciated in the phrases that form the solo introductions, through dynamic accenting. This melodic line, which extends the full length of each phrase, and indeed is one of the main broad structural features of each phrase tends to start from a high point and gradually descend. These passages are quite uniform between different versions of the same song (by the same band anyway), and are not necessarily similar or related to the melody of the song itself.

Figures that accompany the singing tend to be slightly simpler, and do not accent these melodic lines to the same extent. At the end of the solos a series of repeated figures act as cues for the other musicians indicating that the solo is finished and it is time for the entry of the voices. The note frequency analysis from *Tariku tariku* and *Vegalo vavine* indicate that a substantial

proportion of the notes played, most in fact, are open. The tablature, but more obviously the graphs, indicate that a small subset of notes are used for each of the set of phrases played over particular chords, and that these are almost without exception played in the same place each time. The graphs also indicate that the hand remains in the open or first position for most of the time. When the hand does move to another position, the same note subset associated with the chord at the time is used. The figures used to accompany the singing demonstrate these same features.

Certainly then, as far as these two songs go, it is reasonable to conclude that the Samoan tuning has an important role to play in the overall sound of the figures, through the use of open notes, and the selection of notes for the overall tonal palette. A basic component of the guitar texture of the BB Kings is that formed by the various repeating phrases in the Samoan tuning. The tuning makes certain melodic sequences of notes more comfortable on the fret-board. This, in combination with related rhythmic figures and melodic shapes constitutes a ‘Samoan sound’. The fact that it is found in less elaborated forms in several songs recorded by Don Niles in Boera suggests that further research might well support this as contributing to an important part of what is described as Central Province stringband style. Each player imposes specific stylistic characteristics within the confines of realistic practical fingering possibilities of the tuning. This is reinforced by the fact that musicians using this tuning tend to concentrate on playing in the open position where the nature of the tuning is presented through the frequent use of open notes. The repetition not just within a song, but across songs in a song repertoire indicates the significance in terms of its impact on the overall texture of the band.

3.5 *Faiv ki* and East New Britain Province

Practical funding and time constraints did not allow a trip to East New Britain at the same time as the others. From previous trips there, however,

I was well aware of the common use of *faiv ki* tuning in the area. Despite its widespread use I have encountered some difficulty in finding fluent *faiv ki* guitarists. At the end of 1998 I had the fortunate experience of meeting one of the guitar players, Anthony Taule, from the popular live band Quakes. At the time he was living with a UPNG employee who was a close friend of a colleague of mine (Daniel Jonerdhagt). Taule therefore understood my role and that of the school clearly, and had actually embarked on teaching some of his keener relatives himself. Taule constantly affirmed his belief in the importance of *faiv ki* playing in the ENB style as being an important part of the musical heritage and tradition of his home area. He lamented the fact that fewer people were playing in this style and were losing their interest in anything other than playing in standard tuning. Once I expressed an interest in learning about *faiv ki*, Taule undertook to teach me basic aspects of some styles from East New Britain Province. We have spent many afternoons practising stringband songs, and performed one as part of a student concert series at the University of Papua New Guinea.

The Samoan examples analysed were all in a single key, and indeed that is common in Samoan playing. *Faiv ki* introduces a complication in that it can be played in two main keys, even though the tuning remains the same. *Faiv ki* is tuned with the following intervals:

Sixth to fifth string	Perfect fourth
Fifth to fourth string	Major second
Fourth to third string	Perfect fourth
Third to second string	Major third
Second to first string	Minor third

If the sixth string is tuned to a G, then the remaining strings from the fifth through to the first respectively are C, D, G, B, D. If the sixth string is used as the tonic, then the sub-style of *faiv ki* is known as *G ki*. In this case the strings represent scale degree numbers 1, 4, 5, 1, 3, 5 of the G major scale. If, however, the fifth string is used as the tonic, then the sub-style is

known as *C ki*. In this case the strings represent scale degree numbers 5, 1, 2, 5, 7 and 2 from sixth to first strings respectively. Webb (1995, p. 433) in a discussion of *faiiv ki* playing by John Wowono focuses on the *C ki* playing style, with the open notes of the guitar tuned using scale degrees 5, 1, 2, 5, 7 and 2 (from the sixth to first strings). The focus of this analysis is on a song in which the guitar plays using the *G ki* sub-style. Examples of *C ki* will be presented following that for comparison.

The main difference between these styles is that different positions and strings are used for the figures that occur over the chords. Taule described the use of the *C ki* centre as mainly associated with bands from the 1970s, while *G ki* has been extensively used by more recent groups. The use of *ki* therefore is more complex than simply defining a tuning, and I will return to this issue after examining further complexities introduced by the analysis of examples and stringband practice from Madang Province.

In 1998, UPNG music lecturer Daniel Jonerdhagt (from New Ireland Province), Taule and myself practiced, performed and recorded the song *Ia Desi* as a classic example of *faiiv ki* playing and the results of this will be analysed here.⁹ The example used is from a recording made during an informal practice session on the university campus featuring Taule and Jonerdhagt. This song has been a part of stringband repertoire in the ENB province and according to Taule was composed by Richard Tokuraeba from Ratung village. It has been recorded by the Moab Boys stringband and most recently by George Telek on his album titled *Telek*, produced and distributed in Australia.¹⁰ Though it is Taule's playing that is the subject of the analysis, this will be supplemented with my own observations based on participation in learning the style, as Taule has given constant feedback on my attempts to play this style of lead and rhythm guitar in a small stringband ensemble.

Ia Desi starts with a lead guitar introduction, during which the ukulele and rhythm guitar provide a quiet strummed chord accompaniment. The singing then starts and consists of a single verse and chorus, which is then

⁹This is included as example four on the accompanying recording (see page 144).

¹⁰Origin recordings, 1997, OR030.

repeated. The introduction is transcribed in figure 3.17. The lead guitar starts with a repeated phrase of ascending parallel triads leading to the tonic chord. A series of descending quaver figures leads to an undulating passage of narrow ambitus over chord V, before settling to a compound rhythm figure on the tonic that forms the basis of many figures played over chord I later in the song. A variation of the opening phrase is then played, this time with the lowest note separated to accent the compound rhythm. The next bar is similar to bar 2, though it moves straight into the quaver figures. The figure over chord V is arched shape and at a higher pitch than the previous figure used over chord V at bar 3. The harmony shifts to chord I in bar 8 and a combination of crotchet then quaver and three quaver figures interlock with bass notes played by the thumb alternating between two G's an octave apart. The upper voice maintains similar figures, rocking between high B and G (two octaves above middle C).

The main guitar accompaniment to the verse is transcribed in figure 3.18. The bar before the change to chord IV always consists of a series of descending thirds as shown at bars 2 and 11. The F natural at the end of this forms the chord of I7, strengthening the move to chord IV (although short-lived, resolving the movement as a secondary dominant). Compound rhythm throughout the bar marks the figure over chord IV, before returning to the rocking figure commonly used over chord I again. The figure over chord V consists of a compound rhythm for the first bar, then borrows part of the chord I figure at the end of its second bar before resolving to chord I again.

The descending triad figure played over chord I is described as a ‘warning’ by Taule and assists the players in timing the change to chord IV. In our performances the lead part took on the role of providing this warning and in my initial attempts to perform this song I often misjudged the correct point at which to play it. This resulted in the other players staying on the same chord rather than changing anyway even though they knew the song structure thoroughly. Taule constantly reminded me that this is an essential feature of the role of lead guitarist and on reflection I realise that the musicians were

testing me in this regard.

A lead break is then played in the upper octave of the guitar, although has not been transcribed here due to the improvisatory, varying nature in different performances. This is played on the top two strings with high pitched diads forming the most prominent part of the passage. The warning to chord IV is given once again through the addition of a minor 7th to the I chord. Taule stops playing the constant dotted crotchet bass line with the thumb and focuses on extracting the maximum volume out of the guitar while playing this solo.

The rhythm guitar player continues with the same figures that accompany the rest of the song. This section is played twice before settling on the standard arpeggio phrases used previously for chord I. The verse is then sung again, followed by the chorus and following the same cues, warnings and chord progression described earlier. The final phrase of the chorus is played three times, before an instrumental coda is added. This is actually a variation of the warning which provided a good deal of amusement, as although it is obvious to both performers and listeners that the song is at an end, the use of the minor 7th added to the tonic chord tends to stall the expectation of final harmonic stability.

Each of these sets of phrases rely on standard fretting positions in the left hand. Figure 3.21 demonstrates the selection of notes using fret-board diagrams. The rhythm guitar played by Jonerdhaght performs simpler accompaniment figures, but at a lower pitch, utilising the second and third positions of the fret-board as shown in figure 3.19. If another rhythm guitar is added there is a third position that rhythm figures can be performed in for chord I in the open position as shown in figure 3.20.

Figure 3.22 is a graphical transcription of the first nine bars of the opening solo. Figures 3.23 and 3.24 are direct graphical transcriptions of figure 3.18. This passage has been chosen as it provides a very good example of the fundamental phrases under discussion. Most noticeable is the use of the bottom three strings as open notes only, the even quaver movement of the

The musical score consists of four staves of notation, likely for a sitar, arranged vertically. Each staff includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a time signature of common time.

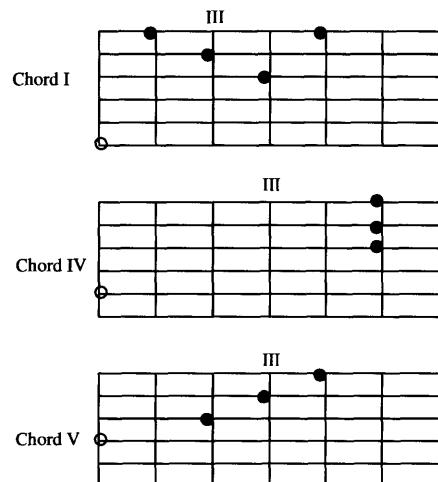
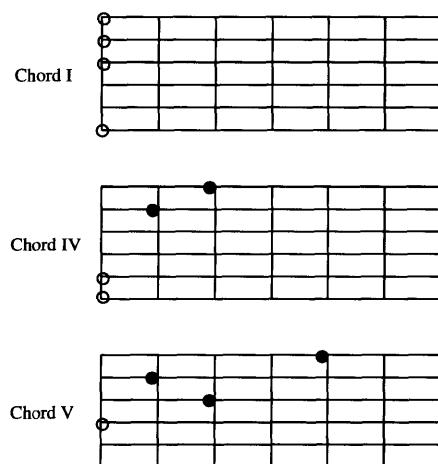
- Staff 1:** Features a continuous eighth-note pattern. Fingerings below the staff indicate: 5-5-7-8, 9-9-9-7-8, 9-7-8, 9-7-8, 7-9-9-9-7-8-8-7, 9-7-9-7.
- Staff 2:** Features a continuous eighth-note pattern. Fingerings below the staff indicate: 9-0, 9-10, 5-7-8, 9-7-8, 9-7-8, 9-7-8, 9-7-8.
- Staff 3:** Features a continuous eighth-note pattern. Fingerings below the staff indicate: 7-9-9-9-10-10-9-7-8, 8-9-0-8-9-9-10-9, 9-0-9-9-10-9-7-8.
- Staff 4:** Features a continuous eighth-note pattern. Fingerings below the staff indicate: 9-0-8-0-9-10-9, 9-0-8-9-7-9-8, 0-0-0-0.

Figure 3.17: *Ia Desi*: opening solo

The figure consists of six staves of musical notation for a six-string guitar. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various note heads (solid black, open, and hollow), rests, and slurs. Below each staff, a six-line staff shows the corresponding fingerings for each string (T, A, B) from bottom to top. The fingerings are indicated by numbers (e.g., 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) or dashes (-) indicating no finger is used.

Staff	T	A	B
1	8 0	8 0	0
2	8 0	8 0	0
3	8 0	8 0	0
4	8 0	8 0	0
5	8 0	8 0	0
6	8 0	8 0	0

Figure 3.18: *Ia Desi*: guitar phrases accompanying verse

Figure 3.19: *Ia Desi*: rhythm playing area 1Figure 3.20: *Ia Desi*: rhythm playing area 2

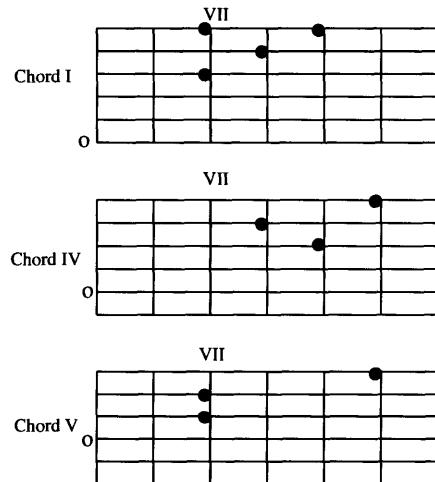


Figure 3.21: *Faiv ki G ki* style: lead guitar playing areas

alternating thumb technique, and the prominence of notes above the seventh fret. Also important to notice is the frequency of particular notes, as this is an effective visualisation of the common note pool and limited subset of notes used as described previously.

This analysis of the lead guitar part for this particular version of *Ia Desi* indicates particular aspects of guitar style that are evident in other uses of *faiv ki*. Some further examples of *faiv ki* in the *G ki* style will be analysed to gain a wider perspective and demonstrate stylistic similarities.

3.5.1 *Abebe*

Abebe is a song from ENB recorded on the Not Drowning Waving album titled *Tabaran* (featuring the Moab Boys Stringband).¹¹ The basic phrases described above are evident in this version as shown by a transcription of the most regularly occurring phrase in figure 3.25.

This has been transcribed from a commercial recording only, so no direct information regarding how it is played has been available. It certainly sounds

¹¹WEA Records, 1990, 903172999.2

Figure 3.22: *Ia Desi*: graph of solo (bars 1-9)

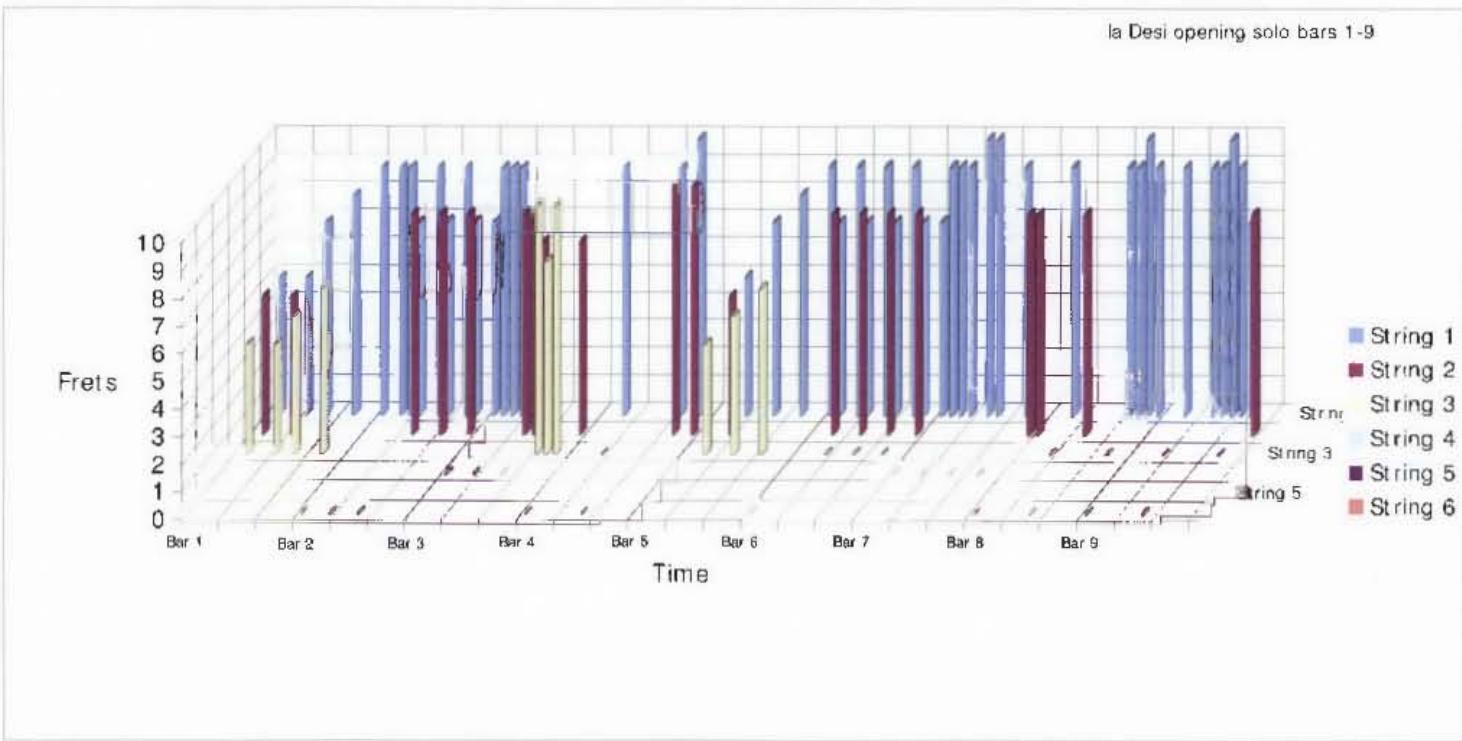


Figure 3.23: *Ja Desi*: graph of accompaniment (bars 1-9)

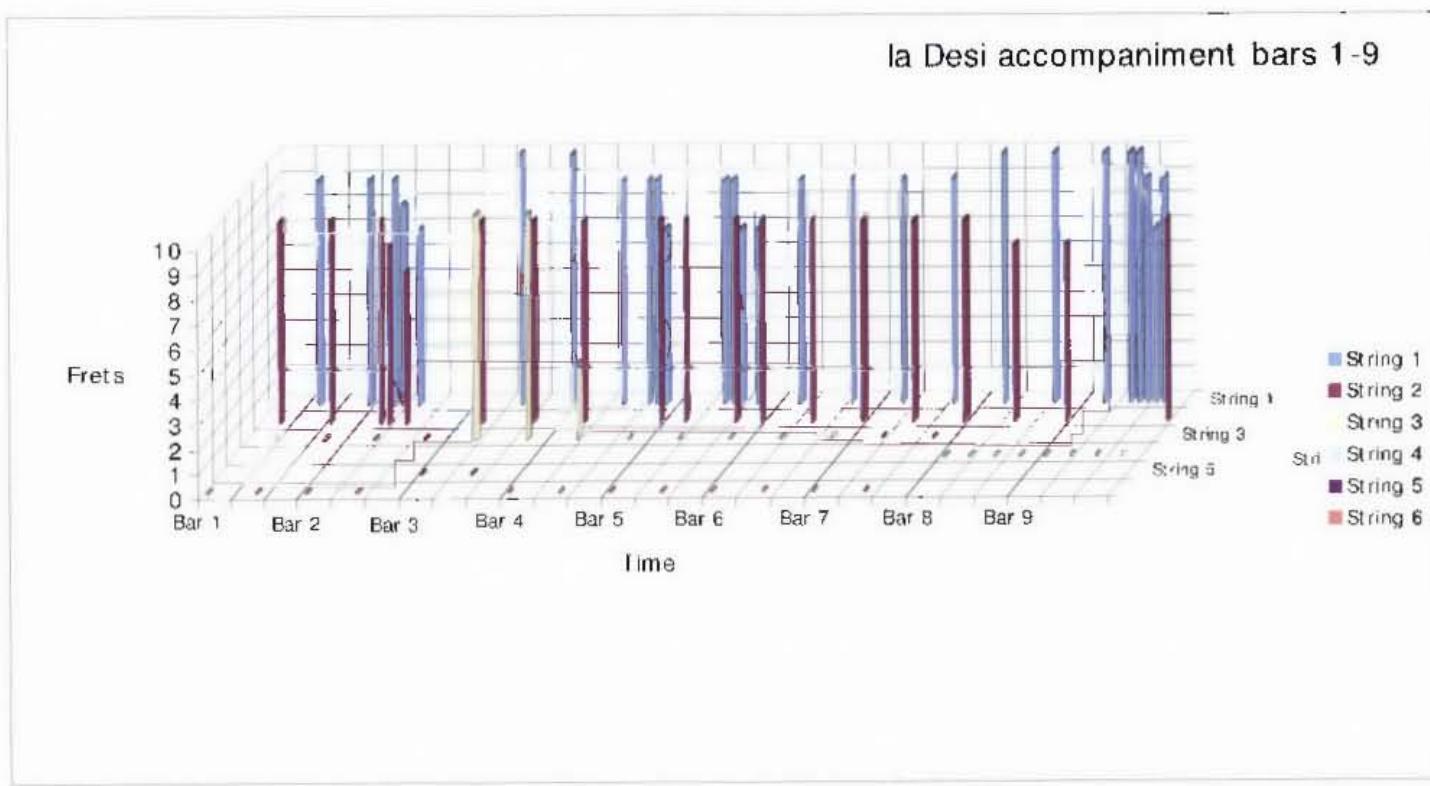
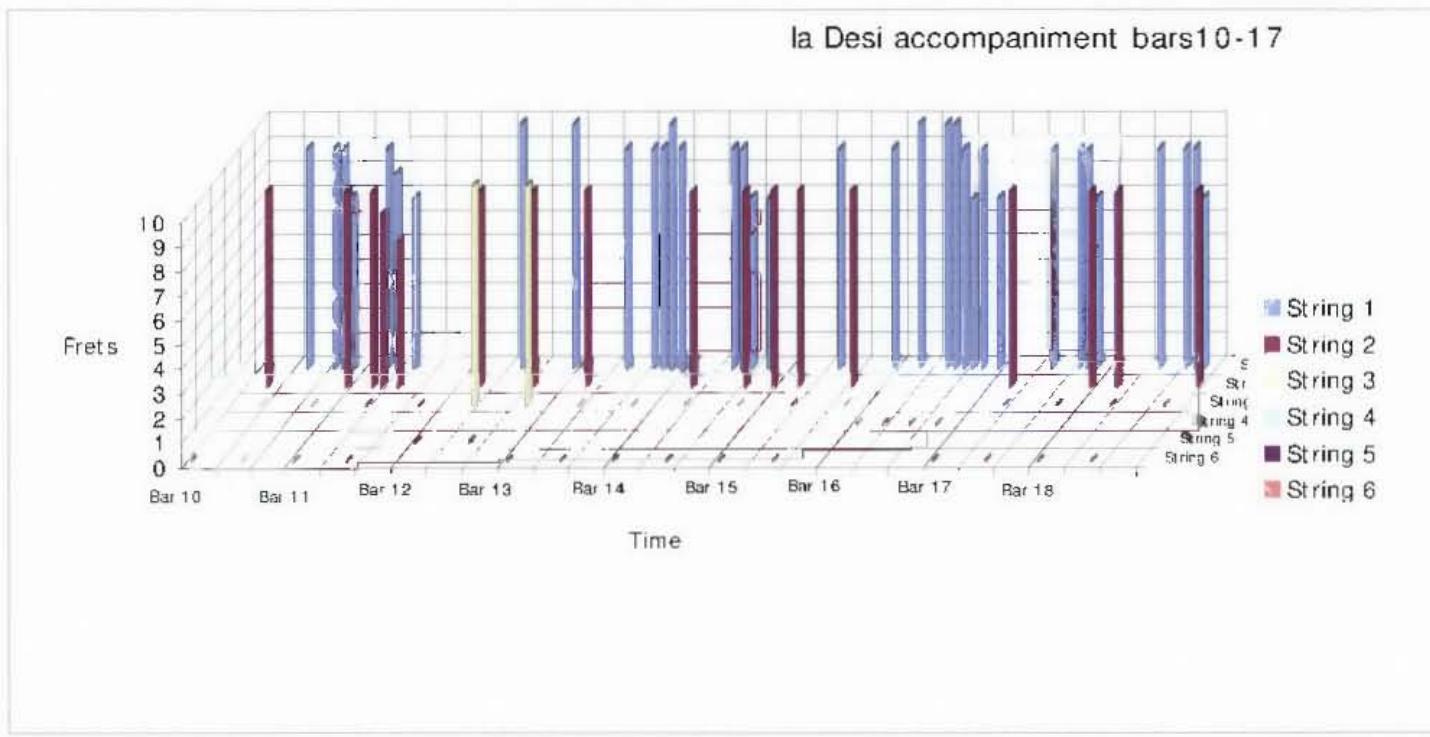


Figure 3.24: *Ia Desi*: graph of accompaniment (bars 10-17)



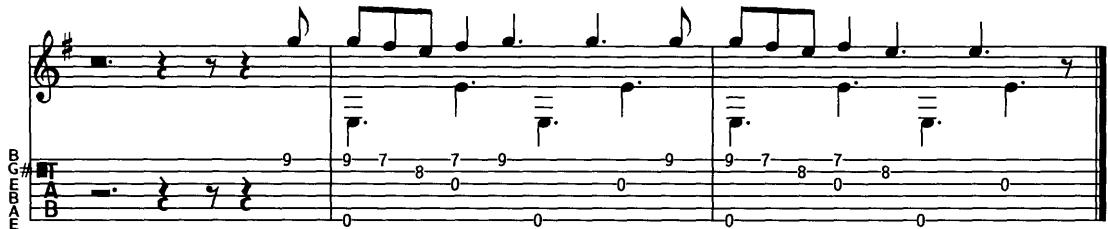


Figure 3.25: *Abebe* (NDW version): extracted *faiv ki* phrases

like *faiv ki*, and the figures are similar. By inferring that *faiv ki* has been used, and attempting to fit the phrases to appropriate fret board locations consistent with those used over the primary chords in the previous analysis indicates that it is indeed consistent. The transcribed figure fits precisely into the same position and fretboard playing locations of the pitches as for the previous example.

The tuning is a minor third lower in the key of E, so the tablature most directly illustrates the similarity of these figures with those previously transcribed.¹² Over chords IV and V simpler figures involving chord tones only are played, but these involve voicings that are most easily played in the positions indicated previously.

These examples demonstrate a similarity of phrasing that is linked to a specific note pool limited to a select area of the fret-board. From the examples explored so far, *faiv ki* can be described as a series of short phrases with a compound rhythm. An upper part generally starting on the beat, but ending with prominent syncopation moves in a cyclic wave motion over a melodic ambitus less than a fifth. This occurs over a regular dotted crotchet bass alternating between the low and high octave of the tonic, or tonic and

¹²Though difficult to confirm from the recording alone it is likely that this example uses a guitar tuned with the sixth string at E, then the notes A, B, E G♯ and B from fifth to first strings respectively, and that a capo is used on the third fret, raising the pitch a minor third. In this example the tablature assumes the open position when capoed to be the starting fret. This is very useful when comparing guitar style across instruments tuned to different base pitches.

fifth of the chord. The pitches used are limited to those from the note pool described earlier. It is important to remember that this is a preliminary description, but serves as a useful starting point as we explore some other sub-styles of *faiv ki* in the following sections.

Although this represents a preliminary point from which to consider further examples of *faiv ki* in the *G ki* style, the situation regarding style may be further complicated by looking at a style known as ‘Gordon’s’ or ‘Gordon’s Dry’. This is a reference to a style that is related to that made popular by a band known as the Gordon’s Dry Boys. This uses the *G ki* playing area, though has some differences to those features summarised above. These examples are actually part of the repertoire of bands from the neighbouring Duke of York Islands group, and therefore represent a different, though nevertheless related regional style. The following analysis is a cursory excursion to investigate how the same tuning and playing location are used in other contexts to create different, though related styles in other areas.

3.5.2 Examples of Gordon’s Dry

In September 1998, during a recording session in Miokopalpal village in the Duke of York Islands, members of Gilnata stringband performed two songs, *Reina* and *Tokaliku*, in what was described as ‘Gordon’s style’.¹³ A brief examination of some of the instrumental accompaniment in these reveals similar phrases once again. Figures 3.26 and 3.27 show the most common figures used as basic phrases accompanying the singers. An obvious comparison also exists in the nature of the *steps* to these two songs. Both involve an ascending run to F natural, the minor seventh of chord I, before a two bar phrase over chord V. This is then repeated and settles on phrases over chord I before the singing starts. The phrases over D, though slightly different in degree of elaboration consist of a main descending line from a high C or D of the first string descending through C, B and A to the tonic G. As Webb has

¹³These are included as examples five and six respectively on the accompanying recording (see page 144).



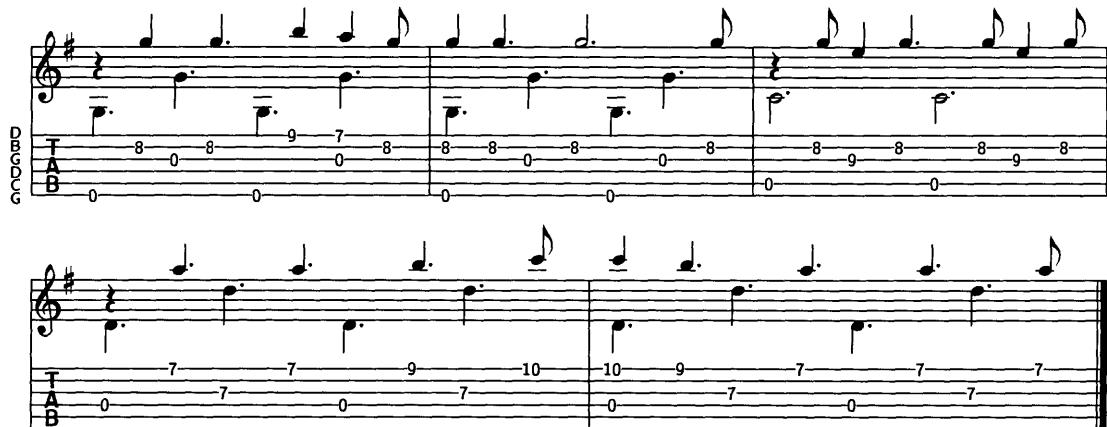
Figure 3.26: *Reina*: extracted *faiiv ki* phrases

pointed out similar steps are often used for a number of songs, and represent a signature sound for particular players and bands. As the tablature indicates, the same fret-board area and common notes played in these positions over particular chords are used once again.

The most obvious difference between Gordon's Dry and *G ki* is the reduced density of notes in the upper part, and a constant rocking crotchet, quaver movement in syncopation with the bass part.

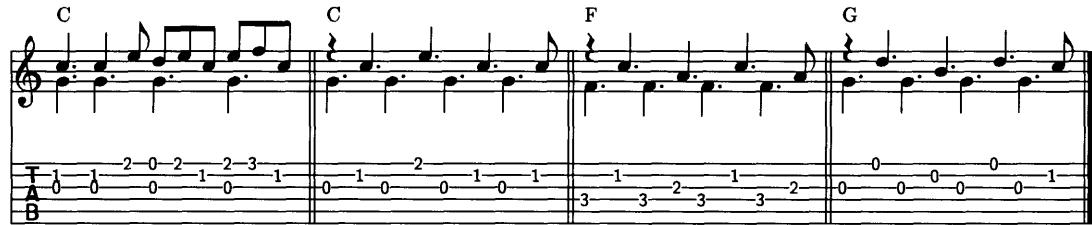
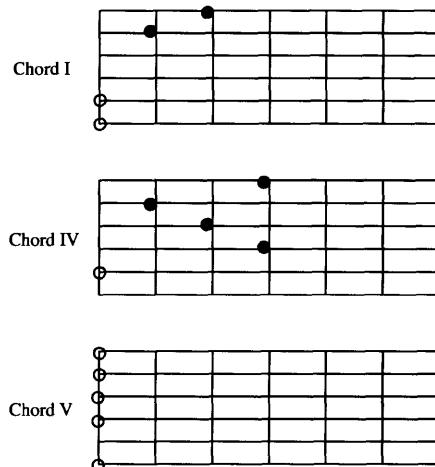
3.5.3 *C ki*

During my sessions with Taule, a discussion of another sub-style known as *C ki* came about when discussing various bands that were known in ENB for using *faiiv ki*. Taule described its use as generally being associated with older

Figure 3.27: *Tokaliku*: extracted *faiv ki* phrases

stringbands during the 1970s. I was unable to record any live performances of the *C ki* style, and therefore my only experience of it was through a series of demonstrations presented by Taule, where he focused on explaining the fretboard areas in which phrases are built up over the primary chords.

To play *C ki* the guitarist keeps the same tuning, but the key centre changes so that the open fifth string becomes the tonic note. As a result of the shift in tonality, the relationships between the chords and associated notes used to play over them change on the fret-board. Similar phrases to *G ki* are played; the result is a subtly different set of note relationships. A good example of *C ki* is provided in another recording of *Abebe*, again appearing on Telek's album titled *Telek* (see page 81). In this recording, the essential textural elements of a larger stringband ensemble have been maintained, but are played solo, resulting in a lighter texture than that of most stringbands. A guitar playing fairly sparse phrases is accompanied by a ukulele playing triplet figures, and a characteristic ENB stringband bass line (see figures 3.30 and 3.31 as bass line examples), involving rapid arpeggio

Figure 3.28: *Abebe* (Telek version): principal *C ki* phrasesFigure 3.29: Fret-board areas for *C ki* phrases

phrases. The principal guitar figures are notated in figure 3.28, and the fret-board areas for each of the phrases played over particular chords is shown in figure 3.29. Basic phrases that develop from these positions follow a similar rhythmic structure to those of the *G ki* area; the differences are in the note relationships through different chord inversions, the lower pitch area, and the different relationships between bass notes of the guitar parts (the tonic being the open 5th string, the fifth the open 6th string and the 4th the 3rd fret of the 4th string).

As a result of the different key centre, chord shapes and the selection of notes bear different relationships to that of the *G ki* style. The most

important defining aspect of the *C ki* style in relation to that previously described is in the nature of slightly different phrases formed through playing in different positions of the guitar.

The basic fingering areas and the corresponding set of notes that are used in combination with particular rhythmic patterns define the fundamental features of *faiiv ki* guitar style. Each chord has a particular set of notes, played in a particular area of the guitar. Phrases are formed from these notes based on some common rhythmic ideas. These involve two alternating bass notes (or a bass note and higher note from the basic triad - either tonic, third or fifth) with the index finger picking syncopated patterns of dotted crotchet, crotchet, and quaver groupings. The three quaver patterns usually occur on the third or fourth beats of a bar (or at the middle and end of the basic phrase unit). These principles are applied to all guitar parts. A rhythm guitar will be expected to stay within a certain area. Another rhythm guitar might play in the same area, or employ another variation in the open position, and they will maintain this throughout the song. These interlocking, harmonically complementary relationships create the texture that help to define what many people describe as *faiiv ki*, East New Britain guitar style. Many of these attributes exist in other examples of ENB stringband music and their combination with other instruments in the ensemble create the texture that is commonly described as ENB stringband style. A brief examination of other principal elements in the ensemble will be examined now to contextualise the focused guitar style analyses.

One of the most distinctive features of ENB stringband music is the triplet pulse. The ukulele often provides a constant strummed part exhibiting little further rhythmic elaboration than constant triplet figures, and generally using chord voicings that do not create a melodic line through the prominence of a changing upper note in the chord voicing (as common in stringband music of the Central Province for example).

Another distinctive feature is a bass part played on a guitar involving a strong down beat on the root of the chord, followed by triplet rhythm figures

Figure 3.30: *Ia Desi* (Telek version): bass lineFigure 3.31: *Abebe* (NDW version): bass line

based on chord notes and passing notes (with the 6th being prominent). Figure 3.30 is the opening bass line of the Telek version of *Ia Desi*. It consists of a series of repeated phrases just described, until chord V, with a distinctly contrasting descending line back to the tonic. Figure 3.31 is a transcription of common bass phrases from the Not Drowning Waving recording of Abebe (see page 87), played by the Moab Boys stringband and these same types of figures are evident.

3.6 The north coast Madang area

I travelled to a number of villages north of Madang province, focusing on places in which I had contacts through UPNG music students I was teaching at the time. While staying at Malala Secondary School I travelled to Rurunat, Medebur, and Toto village (see figure 1.4). Moving then to an area closer to

Madang town I stayed in Baiteta village, and spent a day at nearby Bomase village in the Rempi village group (see figure 1.3).

In Rurunat village, an evening session was arranged by string band enthusiast Jeff Sawai. This consisted of reconstructions of previous stringband styles performed by musicians active in stringbands since the 1960s. In Medebur and Toto, I recorded two bands, neither of which featured guitar parts using tunings other than standard. All of the guitars in these bands were strummed, rather than picked. In Baiteta village, I recorded reconstructions of earlier styles performed by musicians who had previously been active players and band members in the 1960s and 1970s. I also recorded a band that were practising and performing at the time I was in the village. This group included bamboo, strummed rhythm guitars, and a lead guitar in standard tuning amplified by a battery powered amplifier with an acoustic guitar pickup.

The material gleaned from the research in Madang is therefore different to that from the other areas discussed so far in that bands active at the time I was there tended not to use tunings other than standard, and featured strummed, rather than picked guitar parts. The exception to the strumming feature is with the band recorded in Baiteta, so that will be the primary focus of the following analysis for this area.

3.6.1 Baiteta village

Baiteta is about 25 km north of Madang and inland from the Rempi village group. I travelled there in January 1997 to record stringband songs and conduct interviews with musicians. A UPNG music student from Baiteta, Simon Dou, and another from the Bogia area, Michael Kteng, accompanied me. On breaks from his studies Dou performs with a stringband called the Baiteta Bush Band Boys (known as the ‘BBBs’ or ‘B cubed’), consisting of his older brother Arnold and a number of young men from the village. We spent several evenings with members of the BBBs and those of an older stringband discussing, recording and performing stringband music.

3.6.2 Baiteta Bush Band Boys

The Baiteta Bush Band Boys formed in the early 1980s, and continue to play in the village and at hotels in Madang as entertainment for tourists. The band that played for this field recording consisted of two bamboo players, a lead guitar and three rhythm guitars.

Nine songs were recorded: *B-Cubes need*, *Apul do pi*, *Ol kain music*, *Kometi kansol*, *Malala dem dem*, *Ignuta ugta*, *Se bab o*, *Se ganani* and *Senedik sori*.¹⁴ In all of these songs the lead guitar starts, then settles into a figure that leads to the entry of the voices. The lead guitar continues playing an elaborated version of this figure throughout the song, and comes into prominence when the voices drop out between verses. The songs consist of a verse, repeated twice, then a chorus repeated twice. The two sections are related, the chorus merely being a modification of the verse. The text plays a very important role in determining phrase length. I encountered this while spending a couple of evenings playing bamboo with the band. Sometimes when I felt a chord change coming up I was mistaken (I was thinking in four and eight bar phrases from experience in jazz and popular groups), and it required a knowledge of the song phrase structure to predict and play the changes correctly.

All of the musicians sing and tend to harmonise a main melody that is prominent as the upper part. There is no clear distinction between lead and backup vocals. The vocal texture demonstrates aspects of homophony in the declamatory style of singing the lyrics together in the same rhythm, and heterophony in that the basic melody is sung with slight variation (some going up at the end of a phrase instead of down, or a voice staying on one pitch while another follows the melody more closely).

The performers describe the voice timbre as *nek* (Tok Pisin for neck, but used specifically to refer to the sound of the voice) and is a nasal head tone sometimes sung in falsetto. There was a lot of re-tuning during the

¹⁴ *Ignuta ugta* and *Ol kain musik* are included as examples seven and eight respectively on the accompanying recording (see page 144).

warm up to the BBB recordings to find a pitch range that suited the singers. The audience which had assembled was requested to be patient while singers ‘psyched up’ (their term) and found the right *nek* that fitted their range and provided a strong sound. The top voice tends to stand out as the main melodic line but there is regular part crossing depending on the appropriate range for the singer.

All of these songs used two sets of layered bamboo tubes arranged and tuned as shown in figure 3.32. Some recordings were made with an old set of bamboo that had dried, cracked in places and were considered to be too out of tune. The next morning a new set was cut for subsequent recordings. The lower sounding set has four lengths per layer and the higher sounding set has three lengths per layer. The instrument is played by sitting on top of the pile of bamboo layers and striking the open ends with a pair of rubber thongs. Both players use a similar technique, hitting the outer tubes first, then the inner tubes as shown in figure 3.33. The Bamboo (*mambu* in Tok Pisin) is essential in setting up the rhythmic groove, as well as playing an important bass role.

The musicians describe the chord built on the second degree as *flet* (see Webb 1995, p. 427, for the use of the same term in ENB) and is only rarely used in contrasting sections as a change in harmony. Sometimes the *flet* chord is used in the introduction, before settling down on a tonic riff before the singing starts. The sixth is added to the basic triad and forms an essential part of the harmonic structure and is not merely a decoration of the triad. Evidence for this is in the fact that it is constantly used (no differentiation is made by the players between an D and a D6 chord for instance) and the constant use of it as a chord tone in the lead guitar part.

The verse consists of a relatively simple diatonic melody which is then followed by the chorus. This consists of a similar melody in terms of shape but at a higher pitch (which tends to increase the intensity in relation to the verse) and ends with a modification of the final phrase of the verse again. The bamboo and rhythm guitar set up the basic groove over which the lead

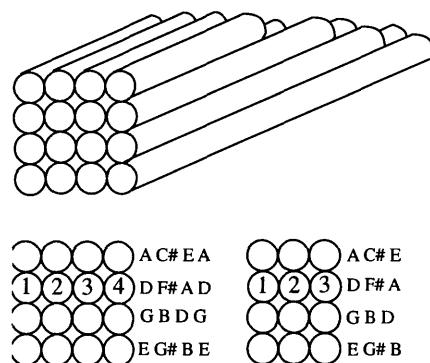


Figure 3.32: Bamboo tuning used by the BBBs

Musical notation for playing the bamboo instrument. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Short bamboo' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Long bamboo'. Both staves are in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation uses vertical stems with circled numbers 1, 2, 3, or 4 indicating which node to play. The first measure shows notes at positions 1, 2, and 3 for both staves. The second measure shows notes at positions 1, 2, 3, and 4 for both staves. The third measure shows notes at positions 1, 2, 3, and 4 for both staves. The fourth measure shows notes at positions 1, 2, 3, and 4 for both staves.

Figure 3.33: Method of playing the bamboo used by the BBBs

guitar improvises a syncopated line. The groove is maintained throughout the piece, with the lead guitar coming into prominence when the singing stops at the end of phrases. The underlying groove for most pieces is a straight quaver feel, though some songs use a dotted or swing feel. The texture might be described as stratified in that each part has a particular role that is maintained with minimal variation in style and function throughout the song. There is little dynamic variation - there are a couple of breaks but other than that the piece continues with all instruments playing throughout.

The opening couple of bars by the lead guitar are known and recognised as cues for the start of the song and once the band is in regular practice these seem to be known almost instantly. The lead guitar plays a syncopated line with elaborate arpeggio melodic figures throughout the piece and is most prominent at the beginning of the song, and then at the ends of phrases when the voices have stopped. The lead guitar starts with a solo introduction (*step*). This is a single melodic line consisting of arpeggio fragments and scalewise steps and is often syncopated. Almost without exception in all of the songs the lead guitar would settle down to a syncopated figure repeated several times before the singing started. This is a similar feature to that noted in the Samoan and *fai'v ki* examples.

Figure 3.34 is a transcription of the opening solo of *Ignuta ugta*. The first phrase is seven bars long, starting with a series of ascending arpeggios repeated so that the upper note outlines a syncopated rhythm. These figures continue for four bars until pausing on the high A, then descending to the tonic D in bar 7. Bars 8 to 12 essentially repeat the opening phrase. Bars 13 onwards are repetitions of a continuously syncopated (out of phase with the main pulse might be a better description) line, with some minor variations, until the singing enters at bar 20. Figure 3.35 is a transcription of the opening solo to *Ol kain musik*. Once again it consists of an opening phrase (bars 1 to 7), which is then repeated with slight variation before settling down to the repeated figures in bars 13 to 16. The opening solo introduction to *Se bab o* is transcribed in Figure 3.36. The first phrase, from bars 1 through

Figure 3.34: *Ignuta ugta*: solo transcription

6 can be seen as two three bar sub-phrases, each with an opening figure starting on the second quaver of the bar, to repeated ascending arpeggios for two bars in each case (bars 2-3, and bars 5-6). This first sub-phrase is repeated from bars 7 to 10, before a more dynamic ascending line and scalic figures lead to a syncopated phrase at bar 14. This is the repeated linking phrase that leads to the singing which enters at bar 17, and is similar to the same concept seen in numerous examples to this point.

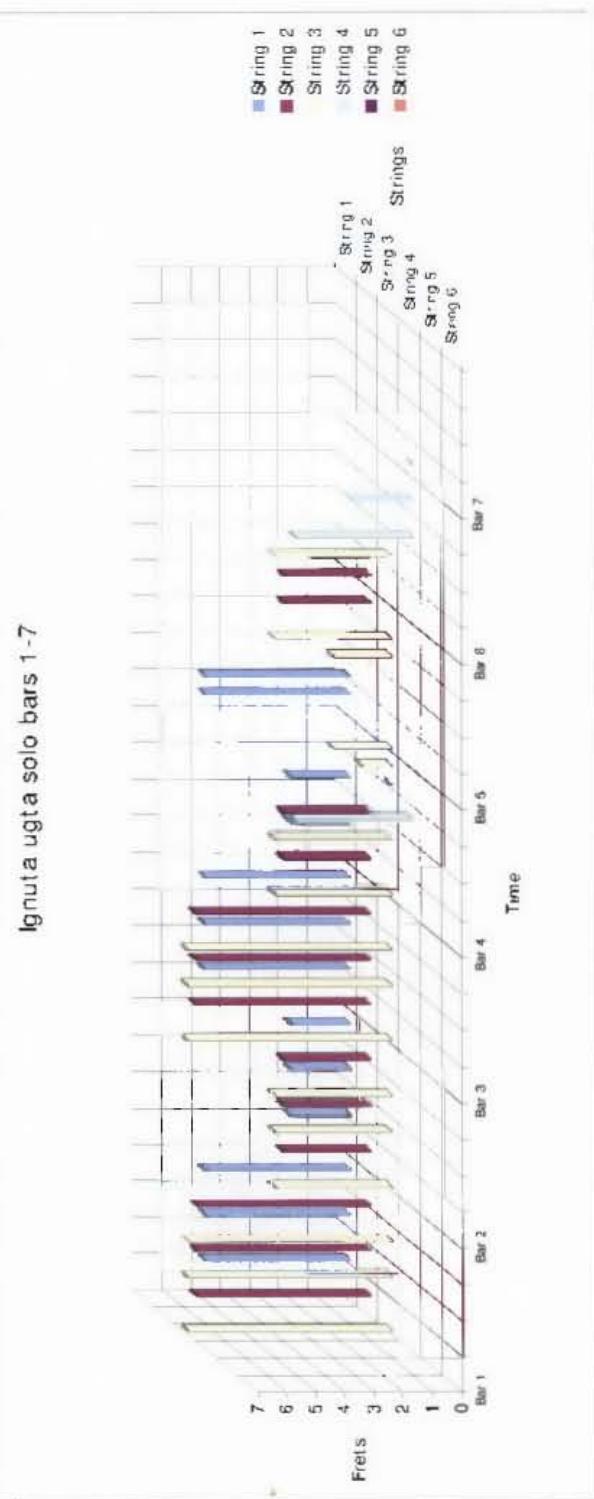
The solo sections to *Ignuta ugta*, *Ol kain musik* and *Se bab o* have been graphed in figures 3.37, 3.38 and 3.39 respectively. The graphs, in highlighting the different set of notes used in each solo indicate that although these lead guitar parts are built from repeated phrases, there is no real consistency in the characteristics of these phrases between different songs. It is as if the goal appears to be to provide maximum variation in these sections, as each solo is quite different in character. None of the solos are played predominantly in the open position, and open notes are rarely used. This leads to the conclusion that the situation I encountered in Madang in regard to specific

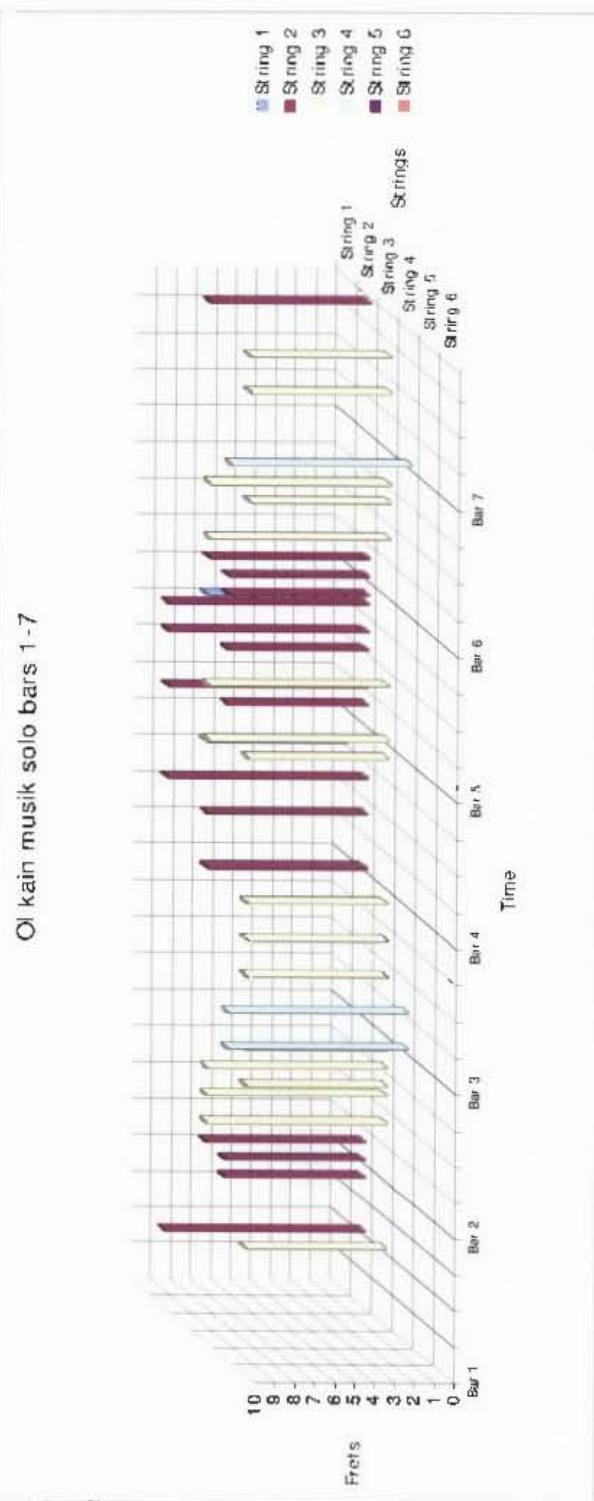
Musical score for 'Ol kain musik' featuring three staves of music. The top staff is for voice T, the middle for voice A, and the bottom for voice B. The score consists of 17 measures, numbered 2 through 17. The key signature is F major (one sharp). Measure 2 starts with a dotted half note followed by eighth-note pairs. Measures 3-5 show eighth-note patterns. Measures 6-11 continue the eighth-note patterns. Measures 12-17 introduce sixteenth-note patterns. The vocal parts are supported by harmonic patterns indicated by vertical stems.

Figure 3.35: *Ol kain musik*: solo transcription

Musical score for 'Se bab o' featuring three staves of music. The top staff is for voice T, the middle for voice A, and the bottom for voice B. The score consists of 16 measures, numbered 2 through 16. The key signature is F major (one sharp). Measures 2-6 show eighth-note patterns. Measures 7-11 continue the eighth-note patterns. Measures 12-16 introduce sixteenth-note patterns. The vocal parts are supported by harmonic patterns indicated by vertical stems.

Figure 3.36: *Se bab o*: solo transcription

Figure 3.37: *Ignuta ugta*: graph of solo (bars 1-7)

Figure 3.38: *Ol kain musik*: graph of solo (bars 1-7)

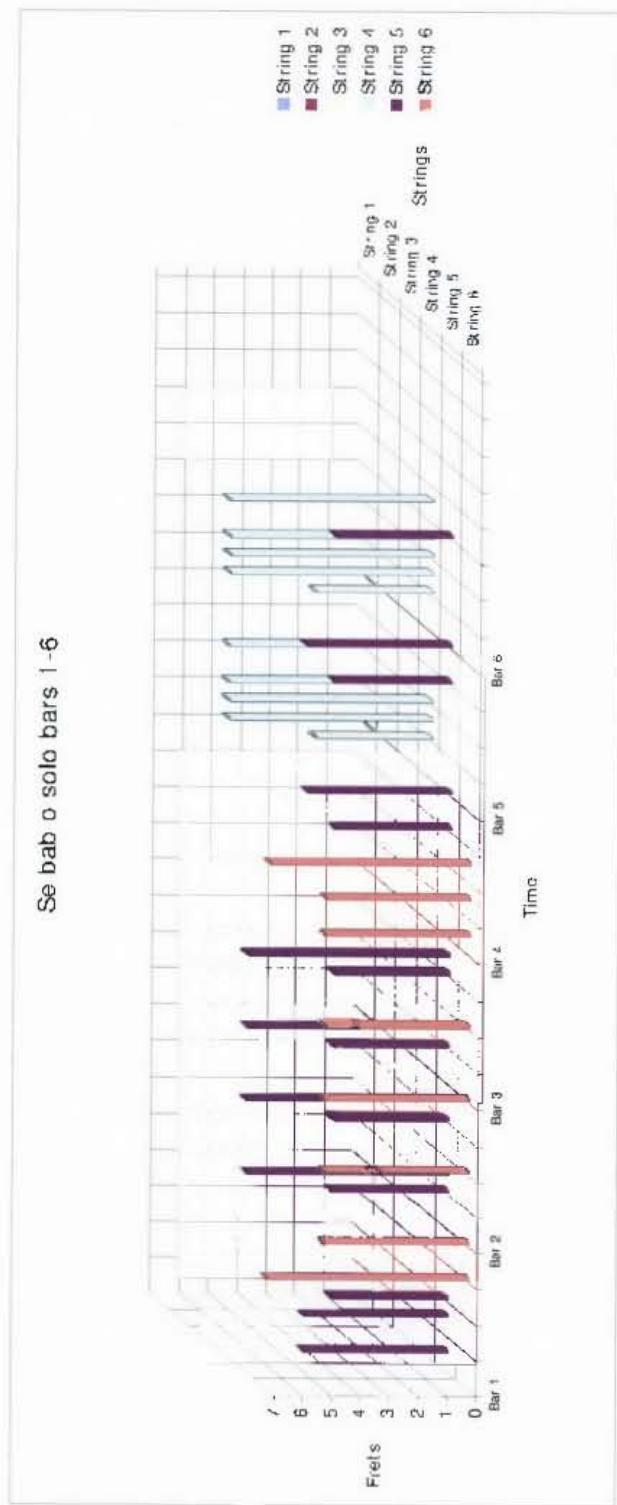


Figure 3.39: *Se bab o*: graph of solo (bars 1-6)

non-standard tunings being an important influence on regional style as not being the case as it was with Samoan in the Central Province and *faiiv ki* in ENBP. Phrases that link the *step* and the first verse demonstrate similarities in their structure in that they tend to be one bar repeated phrases with the same rhythm (or only slight rhythmic variations). This bar is played several times before the rest of the band joins in with the first verse. Phrases that the lead guitarist uses to assist in accompanying the singers are interesting in that they tend to be variations of what I have called these linking phrases. They also bear similarity to the linking phrases seen at the end of solos, before the voices enter in the Samoan material analysed previously.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the research in Madang was from the sessions that involved the reconstruction of older styles. This provides an enlightening, if somewhat complicating, perspective on the use of the term *ki* and will be investigated briefly to assist in moving towards a more general summary of its use in all of the areas studied.

3.6.3 Baiteta style reconstructions

Three musicians from Baiteta, Peter Akoi, Peter Gim and Alvis Grumar, performed three songs from the early stringband repertoire in the village from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The three songs, *Ano mamo*, *Hello goodbye John* and *Mi sanap long redio* share almost identical guitar introductions (*step*). The band warmed up by playing this common *step* and I recorded each instrument on three separate recording passes to extract each guitar part in turn.¹⁵ A transcription of this passage is shown in figure 3.40.

The lead guitar used a tuning known as *hap faiiv* (Tok Pisin for half five), the pitches being C, G, C, G, B and D from the sixth string to the first respectively, and the other two guitars were in standard tuning. It seems likely that the tuning *hap faiiv* is a modification of *faiiv ki*, due to the small differences in tuning on the lower three strings. Each player picked the bass notes with the thumb, and the upper part (notated stems up) with either

¹⁵This *step* is included as example nine on the accompanying recording (see page 144).

Figure 3.40: Baiteta reconstruction: opening *step*

the first finger or first two fingers of the right hand. The lead part defines a more varied melodic line than the others, which pick simple arpeggio figures. The lead guitar plays the first four bars, with simple bass runs provided by the other two players in bars three and four. All players continue after this introductory passage and set the instrumental texture that accompanies the remainder of the song. All parts are played almost entirely in the open position, with only the lead guitar moving to the 5th fret in bar 12.

After the opening passage all of the songs contain several bars where the rhythm consolidates into the texture that essentially remains for the rest of the song. A simple bass line is played on the main crotchet pulse, with alternating second string notes played by the fingers of the right hand. This instrumental texture (described as a picking style by the musicians) is used for all three of these songs. The main differences between songs occurs in the lyrics and melodic line.

The vocal style consists of male voices singing in a tense high register head tone or falsetto. There are two main melodic lines, occasionally branching into three. Singers choose a line and starting pitch that suits individual vocal range. The result is a thick harmonic texture from which the top line emerges as the main melody. I would suggest that this is due more to the perception of the acoustics involved rather than the existence of a defined lead part, as the performers don't describe parts that parallel terms used to describe the vocal component of much Western popular music such as backup or lead vocals. The combined texture provided by a number of guitars picking similar phrases was also seen in other reconstructions in Madang, as the following section demonstrates.

3.6.4 Rurunat style reconstruction

Rurunat village is located about 100 km north-north-west of Madang near Malala Catholic Secondary High School (see figure 1.4). In January 1997 I spent some time with musicians in the village discussing stringband music in the area and recording a number of groups from the village. The session was

organised by Jeff Sawai, an active musician who has been involved with string bands since the mid 1960s. He coordinated rehearsals featuring a number of older musicians, many of whom hadn't played the guitar for twenty years, to represent different periods and styles of stringband from the village over the years.

In an interview prior to performances by the different groups Sawai described the various bands and styles chronologically defining them in terms of whether they were predominantly picked or strummed, and the name of the tuning (*ki*), if any, they were associated with or described by. The players took a considerable time to tune the guitars to their satisfaction. While this is an inevitable part of the process of playing guitars in different tunings it is worth remembering that the musicians performing at this session had only rehearsed briefly in the week leading up to our visit after many years of not playing at all, or only very occasionally. Nevertheless, the ability to tune instruments in these different ways is a prized skill, and one that marks experienced musicians. Though many people recognise different keys, and will readily engage in discussions of style comparison and musical history, I have encountered few people capable of tuning the instruments easily. This is perhaps indicative of the reduction in use today of such open tunings, and the tendency of Sawai and other musicians in the area to associate particular tunings with different historical periods reinforces this notion.

In 1964 bands used a style and tuning known as *blu ki*. Four songs recorded in this session were described as being representative of this *blu ki* period *Aiwolwol*, *Yumi sikan*, *RSTO* and *O kalakus*.¹⁶ The instrumental step and accompaniment was almost identical for all of these songs. Six guitar players and one ukulele player were seated in a semicircle and before playing indicated the open string tunings and name given to each tuning. Three different tunings were used; standard (and another guitar tuned exactly down a tone), *faiv ki* and *rong ki*. *Rong ki* in this case is exactly the same tuning as Samoan. Webb (1995, pp. 426-7) describes the term *rong ki* as being a

¹⁶ *Aiwolwol* is included as example ten on the accompanying recording (see page 144).

modification of another *ki* (for example the *rong ki* of *faiw ki*) through the adjustment of one or two strings from a more commonly used tuning. I have not been able to ascertain exactly which *ki* this is the *rong ki* of, though it might be worth considering the possibility that Sawai had forgotten the name used due to the time lapse since performing in this style regularly. Also, the *faiw ki* used here is different to that seen in the analysis of material from ENB so far. All of the guitars were picked rather than strummed, and there are several distinctive figures that combine to create this texture, which is then described in style terms by the musicians as being *blu ki*. In this sense then, the term is being used to refer to the style that is a result of the combination of numerous instruments in three different tunings playing a set of specific riffs throughout the piece in different registers of the guitar. This is interesting in that the tuning *blu ki*, which has an obvious name similarity to the commonly described *Blu Mounten ki* does not appear to feature here. It is possible that due to the considerable time lapse between the extensive use of this *ki* and the reconstruction, that the musicians had forgotten the tuning and had attempted to perform the essential aspects of the texture in terms of phrase shape based on other (perhaps related) tunings, or had misnamed the *faiw ki* tuning. This highlights some of the inherent problems in attempting to reconstruct older styles and discuss them as though they are fully representative of the scene at the time. The most important conclusion to be drawn from this discussion then is the notion of *ki* and style as being linked, and that a specific period of stringband style is related to the notion of a particular instrumental texture. The result is a fairly busy texture with a rhythm defined by the combination of rapid motifs, rather than the more prominent strummed rhythms of later styles. This texture is constant throughout the song, with only occasional breaks between sections (between the *step* and *verse* for example). I have not successfully transcribed the guitar parts here due to logistical problems in separating the plethora of simultaneously picked guitars. The session at which these recordings were made consisted of a series of groups of different personnel, interspersed with

historical discussions. Numerous different styles were described and then performed as the following section reveals.

From about 1964 to 1967 the *blu ki* style changed to a strummed style known as *blu raf*. Webb (1995, p. 426) describes the use of *rap* keys in the Tolai area of the Gazelle Peninsula in ENB as indicating a tuning which could only be strummed. Given the interchangeability in pronunciation of ‘p’ and ‘f’ in many parts of PNG it seems likely that this is the same term, meaning ‘to rub’ (as in a strumming motion) though I was unable to confirm with the players the direct meaning of the word; they used the expression strum rather than the Tok Pisin *rap*. From 1967 to 1969 bands used a tuning called *A kod*. At this time a group called MTR came into being, and they continued to perform until the mid 1970s. In 1975 the style changed once again using a tuning known as *C kod*, which consisted of standard tuned guitars only.

Many of the earlier songs performed in these reconstruction sessions feature numerous guitars picking different parts simultaneously. Often, the guitars within a group feature different tunings. A tentative hypothesis that emerges from this section is worth posing at this stage. The favoured texture of earlier stringband music from the 1960s and early 1970s in this area seems to have consisted of predominantly picked guitars in combination. In an attempt to make the process of accompaniment in this style as straightforward as possible, different tunings were experimented with that provided the easiest left hand solution to the patterns and figures required. Some of these tunings and styles proved to be more successful than others, possibly as a result of particular bands and players gaining popularity through their instrumental, ensemble, composition and performance skills. Tunings and associated styles such as *faiv ki* and Samoan might be the end result of that process, where the most elaborate guitar part becomes the lead, and other guitars play simpler rhythm figures in support. As mentioned before, this is only a theory based on the few examples seen so far, and a great deal more examples from a wider set of regions would need to be included in testing it.

3.6.5 Summary

Analysis of the set of examples chosen here indicate that guitars tuned in Samoan or *faiv ki* have specific playing locations on the fret-board associated with them. The phrases played are built from figures played in these fret-board locations. These phrases draw heavily on open notes, but even in situations where that is less the case, the tunings and associated fret-board locations, and therefore a distinct note pool, are crucial to characterising style difference. Other stylistic traits are important as well, including rhythmic structure and melodic shape. The issue of region and style is not as simple as stating that there are a certain number of regional styles, all of which use particular distinctive tunings. The fact that *faiv ki* is used more widely than just in East New Britain for example, or that in some areas (Madang, for example) there appear to be no predominant unique non-standard tunings used, indicate this.

This analysis has not drawn widely enough to prove that Samoan is a crucial, all embracing style used throughout the Central Province. I would suggest from numerous comments from students and others in conversations about stringband that indeed it is an important tuning, fairly widely used to the west and east of Port Moresby in the Motu, Hula and Aroma language areas. Of more significance given the narrow scope of examples analysed here is the fact that the names of the tunings are associated with particular regions (Samoan and Central Province; *faiv ki* and East New Britain) and are recognised as being representative of particular styles that are also associated with particular regions. This is fairly straightforward in relation to Samoan in that it doesn't seem to be much more widespread than usage in the Central Province. In the case of *faiv ki*, a tuning that is used in various areas, style is described using both the tuning name, as well as a regional descriptor such as '*faiv ki* East New Britain style'. Other styles that use the tuning, such as Gordon's, did not follow this pattern, although the term itself is probably specific enough in itself, as a reference to a style pioneered by the band it is named after, to provide the regional aspect of description to those people

accustomed to its sound. I would suggest that this is also an example of a more complex layer of sub-style, and that people from another area might well locate it to the islands region, although would probably not mistake it for East New Britain stringband such as that characterised by the example *Ia Desi* covered here.

The points regarding style description just raised generally support the notion of tunings and their associated playing styles as representative of certain regional stringband styles. It is the idea of sub-style that complicates the situation. Dependent on one's listening experience of stringband music, there seem to be numerous levels beyond simple regional descriptions incorporating guitar tuning, and therefore guitar style. In a discussion on stringband music during a course I taught on PNG popular music a student from Madang commented that where someone was from, and their degree of stringband listening and/ or playing experience, made a big difference as to how far the sub-style differentiations could be made. He described how non-Papua New Guineans might think all stringband music sounded the same, although it might be linked to the Pacific area. He went on to describe the possibility of people from a particular province being able to discriminate styles right down to the village and band level in their own province. Styles from other areas would be less-known and the broad style descriptions would be used.¹⁷ This is not really surprising given that experience of a particular style of music tends to involve more acute perception of subtle difference. It is relevant, however, in highlighting the significance of multi-levelled regional distinctions made by Papua New Guineans.

This chapter, and chapter two, have focused on stringband almost exclusively. As described previously however, stringband is no longer the most predominant popular music genre in PNG. The next chapter explores the changes that have taken place, and ways in which stringband music interacts with the more recent musical scene, and therefore how it is situated in the continuum of musical change described earlier.

¹⁷Personal communication with Samson Malai, 1997.