

Examples of ethnomusicological recordings – texts and translations

“Bebi Notsa” – Performed by Margaret, recorded by Willard Rhodes (1943, Kansas)
Language: Creek

Bebi notsa, notsa, notsa.	Baby, sleep, sleep sleep.
Lutsa hopop kahn, ai yang si	Father has gone to find turtle shells
Buksin no thla thla ga his makito ai yang si	He said he'll come back tomorrow.
Bebi notsa, notsa, notsa,	Baby, sleep, sleep sleep.
Lutsa hopo kahn, ai yang si	Father has gone to find turtle shells
Buksin no thla thla ga his makito ai yang si	He said he'll come back tomorrow.
Bebi notsa.	Baby, sleep.

“Shortenin’ Bread” – Performed by Ora Dell Graham and fellow schoolchildren, recorded by John Avery Lomax (1940, Mississippi)

I do love (Shortenin’ bread)	I do love (Shortenin’ bread)
I do love (Shortenin’ bread)	Mama love (Shortenin’ bread)
Mama love (Shortenin’ bread)	Papa love (Shortenin’ bread)
Papa love (Shortenin’ bread)	Everybody love (Shortenin’ bread)
Everybody love (Shortenin’ bread)	
Two little babies layin’ in the bed, One plays sick an’ the other’n play dead.	Old Aunt Dinah sick in the bed, Sent for the doctor, doctor said, “All she need’s some shortnenin’ bread.”
I do love (Shortenin’ bread)	I do love (Shortenin’ bread)
I do love (Shortenin’ bread)	I do love (Shortenin’ bread)
Ev’ry since my dog’s been dead, Hogs been rootin’ my ‘tater bed	Mama love (Shortenin’ bread)
	Papa love (Shortenin’ bread)
	Everybody love (Shortenin’ bread)
I do love (Shortenin’ bread)	

John Avery Lomax, in 1933, on why he chose to make a series of recordings at Parchman Farm State Penitentiary: “My son [Alan] and I conceived the idea this summer that the best way to get real Negro singing in the Negro idiom and the music also in Negro idiom was to find the Negro who had had the least contact with the whites. And so we loaded up a recording instrument in our Ford car and visited remote lumber camps; great cotton plantations where the Negroes were in proportion to the whites is 25 or 100 to one; and certain prison camps in four of the southern states. We were right in our theory I think because—especially in the prison camps—we found the Negroes completely isolated from the whites. They lived in separate dormitories, they ate together, they had no contacts with the whites whatever except with their guards and then in purely official relations. So the songs that these men sang for us, many of the men having been in the penitentiary all the way from 10 to 50 years, we think were as largely as possible removed from the influence of white speech and white singing.”

Alan Lomax, 1948: “In the southern penitentiary system, where the object was to get the most out of the land, the labor force was driven hard. The men rose in the black hours of morning and ran

all the way to the field, sometimes a distance of several miles, with their guards galloping along behind them on horseback. The swiftest workers headed each gang and others were compelled to keep pace with him. Anyone who did not keep up or who rebelled was subject to severe punishment. I saw men who had worked so long and hard that their feet had turned into masses of pulpy bones. I heard everywhere of men working till they dropped dead or burnt out with sunstroke... 'Knocking a joe' or self-mutilation was one way out. The sight of a one-legged or one-armed man who had chopped his own foot or hand off with an axe was a common one.

"Every Southern Negro knew, at least by hearsay, what going down the river (going to the pen) was like, and it was in good part the shadow of this penal system which kept the rural Negro in a state of outward subservience over all the years since Reconstruction."

"Early in the Mornin'" – Performed by 22, Little Red, Tangle Eye, and Hard Hair (1947-48)

(1st Verse) Well, it's early in the morn –in
the morning, baby
When I rise, Lordy mama
Well, it's early every morning a-baby
When I rise well-a well-a
It's early in the morning, baby
When I rise, Lordy baby
You have-, it's I have misery, Berta,
Wa, in my right side
Well-a, in a my right side, Lordy baby-
R-in-a my right side, Lordy, sugar.
Well, it's I have a misery, Berta,
R-in-a my right side, well-a.

(Chorus) Well-a, it's-a, Lordy,
Ro-Lordy-Berta,
Well, it's Lord (you keep a-talkin'), babe,
Well, it's Lord, Ro-Lordy-Rosie,
Well, it's, o Lord, Gal, well-a.

(2nd verse) Well-a, whosenever told it, That
he told a- he told a dirty lie, babe.
Well-a, whosenever told it, that he told a -he
told a dirty lie, well-a.
Well-a, whosenever told it, that he told a -he
told a dirty lie, babe.
Well the eagle on the dollar-quarter,
He gonna rise and fly, well-a.
He gonna rise and fly, sugar.
He gonna rise and fly, well-a.
Well the eagle on the dollar-quarter, He
gonna rise and fly, well-a.

(Chorus)

(3rd verse) Well-rocks 'n gravel make -a
Make a solid road
Well-a takes a-rock –a gravel make a

To make a solid road, well-a
It takes a good lookin woman to make a
To make a good lookin whore
Well-a It takes a good lookin woman, Lord,
Baby
To make a good lookin whore, Lord sugar
It takes a good lookin woman to make-a
To make a good lookin whore, well-a

(Chorus)

(4th verse) Boys, the peckerwood a-peckin'
on the-
On the schoolhouse door, sugar.
Well, the peckerwood a-peckin' on the-
R-on the schoolhouse door, Well-a.
Well, the peckerwood a-peckin' on the-
On the schoolhouse door, sugar.
Well he pecks so hard, Lordy, baby,
Until his pecker got sore, well-a,
Until his pecker got sore, Lordy, baby,
Until his pecker got sore, Lord, sugar.
Well he pecks so hard, Lord, mama,
Until his pecker got sure, well-a.

(Chorus)

(5th verse) Well, hain't been to Georgia,
boys,
but, Well, it's I been told, sugar.
Well, hain't been to Georgia, Georgia.
But, it's I been told, well-a.
Well, haint been to Georgia, Georgia.
But, it's I been told, Lord, mama.