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# CONSTRUCTING MUSIC CULTURE

**A study in creativity through worldbuilding**

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## ABSTRACT

Key words: Composition, Worldbuilding, Culture, Anthropology, Ethnomusicology

This essay explores the creative possibilities of worldbuilding applied to music. It presents anthropological approaches to analysing music culture, and settles upon four main factors (meaning – situation – performance – content) as a basis for a creation of a fictional culture. Through the course of the essay, an example culture will be created, with very brief musical examples, as a demonstration of possible end results and uses of this method of composition.

It is simultaneously a response to a lack of authenticity in fantasy music, and a study of how to apply anthropological conclusions to a compositional process.

*KEM*

*Toujours*

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"Innumerable suns exist; innumerable Earths revolve about these suns ...

Living beings inhabit these worlds"

*Giordano Bruno, 1584*

## INTRODUCTION

The fascination with the imaginary and the fantastical has always accompanied the human creativity. From cave paintings that suggest something beyond imitation<sup>1</sup>, to supernatural myths as old as writing<sup>2</sup>, to the quote on the previous page, which is a contemplation of the possible worlds and possible peoples who inhabit them<sup>3</sup>.

Nowhere has this domain been so thoroughly explored as in literature, and this domain has spilled over into music as often as not. However, when music is engaged to express these worlds, it is always within very restrained traditional forms. It is often less an attempt to understand these foreign concepts (or explore them) than an intention to express their relation to us (as far as there is any conscious intent at all behind the musical interpretation).

My relation to this imagination, this fantasizing comes from literature and games, and most specifically the genres of fantasy and roleplaying.

*“A fantasy text is a self-coherent narrative. When set in this world, it tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it; when set in an otherworld, that otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there may be possible in its terms.”*

(Grant & Clute (Eds.), 1997: Fantasy)

Roleplaying (pen-and-paper roleplaying to be exact) is the activity of creating and acting out a fictional character, within a fictional setting with a rule-set defining the basic possibilities. It is often played within elaborate fictional worlds (from fantasy, inspired by a mythical version of medieval Europe, to science-fiction, imagining a technologically advanced age), with a detailed history, geography, political and economic system, as well as (more often than not) different ethnicities and religions. The complexity and subtlety of all these elements varies

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<sup>1</sup> Cro-Magnon caves in southern France (to which we will return) contain imagery that is highly evocative, and speaks of an imagination beyond the visible, palpable world (Coget 1996).

<sup>2</sup> From the Iliad, to the Old Testament, or the Epic of Gilgamesh, all are fantastical in nature.

<sup>3</sup> The observation was made in a climate where the discussion of a universe that extended far beyond the bounds of the earth was gaining ground. It was a staggering prospect, and still is, to imagine the contents of an unimaginably large universe.

enormously between different systems (and groups of players), but one thing is near universal; the music is awarded very little thought and place, and if there is any sounding component, it is almost exclusively a pastiche of historical music-styles (interpreted in a popular manner) deemed ‘appropriate’ to the setting.

Even within the fictional world, little effort is put into understanding the musical culture, even though all human cultures thus far encountered have had one or other kind of musical expression<sup>4</sup>.

Quite simply, there seems to me to exist a vast well of untapped inspiration and creative material in imagining the musical traditions of these imaginary peoples.

As a composer, this idea intrigues me, because it simultaneously makes it easier to think about extra-musical influences, and forces me to rethink some truths about music that I take for granted. It invites me to imagine another world, in terms of both society and sound, and gives me a way to access and handle musical material that is completely different from that which I am used to.

But it doesn’t only allow a new library of sounds or techniques, it offers a way to change my thinking about music. It applies the critical thinking and dialectic process, ingrained through analysis and composition, to all the key aspects that surround the making of music. It asks the question that so often goes unanswered (and often not even contemplated):

Why, how and when?

Perhaps by answering these questions through the eyes of another culture, I may come closer to finding an answer to it myself.

## CONCEPT

The main purpose of this essay is to explore the creative applications of the literary technique of worldbuilding to composition, and further a personal search for cultural expression and a subjective musical language.

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<sup>4</sup> Don’t get me started on the movie adaptations of Fantasy literature. What little diegetic<sup>5</sup> music there is rehashes violins and Irish folk idioms, and the orchestral soundtracks are versions of ‘Wagner-Light’.

<sup>5</sup> Diegetic = Music that exists within the setting (i.e. that the characters can hear as opposed to a soundtrack)

I will do this by examining the possibilities in constructing an artificial musical tradition, based on an imagined culture's socio-economic factors and a given set of defining features. My aim is to highlight relationships between ideas, form and function of music in a given society, in order to give a greater understanding and empathy for foreign concepts about music, and providing a technique for composing commencing in a thoroughly different mind-set.

### *Delineation*

The act of worldbuilding will be confined to one culture, created for the purpose of this essay, with a somewhat limited technological advancements, in order to limit the amount of detail necessary. This culture will not be 'fantastical'<sup>6</sup>; instead, it aims to be rather mundane and realistic in relation to existing (studied) human societies. This choice was made in order to:

1. Limit the complexity and scope of the creation
2. More reliably derive trends from existing theories based on human societies and music
3. Provide a basic example, from which future (more fantastical) creations may be developed

### *Method*

As a foundation for my work on this essay, I have made forays into two fields to provide a framework, and a method for imagining this society.

The one is creative in kind, and includes the literary technique of worldbuilding, several written examples thereof, and some treatises on the technique, its craft and its philosophical considerations<sup>7</sup>. This is to gain an insight into what elements of the real world can be poignant and necessary to give an impression of a fully developed, complex human society (and also in which order to begin to assemble all these ingredients).

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<sup>6</sup> By which I mean, containing any supernatural, otherworldly or mystical elements.

<sup>7</sup> Formative literature include works (and worlds) by J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, G.R.R.Martin, R. Jordan, T. Goodkind, N. Gaiman, T. Pratchett and J. Sinisalo, with analyses mainly from the Encyclopaedia of Fantasy, P. Anderson and M. Rosenfelder.

The other field is more scientific in nature, and encompasses the research done in ethnomusicology and musical anthropology<sup>8</sup>. Existing models<sup>9</sup> for analysing music in societies will be used as a starting point, but will be modified to accommodate the creative freedoms (and restrictions) required for making it valid as a compositional tool. It is in essence an added process, which combines the parameters gained from observation in order to generate a new creation. In fact, it is the analytical model turned inside out.

In channelling the vast amounts of knowledge that we have acquired about the workings of disparate cultures, the aim is to further the means of creative thought, and open up new pathways for a discourse on music creation, the musical situation and the very meaning and function of the musical elements within a society.

## CONSTRUCTED CULTURES

The main area of interest lies in the cross-section between the literary interest in so-called worldbuilding, and the anthropological analysis and interpretation of music (and music's role in society).

Worldbuilding is a term encompassing the act of imagining, with variable degrees of rigour and originality; an otherworld that is a world separate from, but not necessarily unconnected to, ours with an internally consistent logic and history<sup>10</sup>. It is most frequently encountered in the literary genres of science fiction and fantasy (and all the possible combinations thereof), and has often been linked to the idea of *mythopoeia* (Greek for 'myth-making') as espoused by J.R.R. Tolkien, but it is not necessarily linked to the same aesthetic and moral viewpoints.

Whereas *mythopoeia* focuses on providing a setting with an integral and often foreign mythology (and thus, implied, narrative tradition), it is not necessarily separated from our reality, nor does it have to conform to any notions of self-contained logic or inherent

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<sup>8</sup> These two terms are connected, overlapping, and for the duration of the essay, will be used almost interchangeably, following the use of the respective authors. Musical anthropology can be seen as a discipline within the larger field of ethnomusicology, and also as a bridge between traditional anthropology and musicology itself.

<sup>9</sup> Mainly from musical anthropology and/or ethnomusicology, including work by Kaemmer (1993), Kartomi (1990), Maurin (1992), Fernando (2007) and Blacking (1995).

<sup>10</sup> See above quote from the article on *Fantasy* in Grant & Clute (Eds.), 1997. A world may well be impossible to us, but if the stories told within that world are possible *in its terms*, there is a consistency, a realism of sorts, and it is this element that intrigues me in the art of worldbuilding.

consistency (Grant & Clute (Eds.), 1997: Mythopoeia). Any such constructed myths would be just as susceptible to the contradictory aspects that distinguish many of our real world equivalents.

Worldbuilding may well include a large element of mythopoeia, but above that it often includes detailed information in the aspects of geography, history, politics and religion. It is often driven by an urge to realistically portray a culture or world, with intricate workings of socioeconomic factors, as well as an effort to motivate the narrative within this setting.

It is this vein that interests me, and forms the basis of my proposition; I aim to use real-world knowledge as a basis for constructing a fictional society. This is because the variation and ingenuity present already in cultures around the globe is so much greater than anything I could invent<sup>11</sup>. By incorporating this knowledge, I can only hope that my fictitious creation absorbs at least a trifle of the subtlety and grandeur of the real.

## **The *Fimucu***

Before we can begin speculating about the music of a fictional culture, we need to know something about the culture itself. When approaching the creation of a new culture, one can essentially begin at any end of the spectrum and work oneself forward from that place.

For the purposes of this essay, I will create a fictional musical culture, furthermore referred to as the *Fimucu*, starting with their geographic location, and derive from there. In order to continue, we will have to make a short presentation of what we know so far about them. These ‘facts’ will then inform and guide our process in creating their musical culture.

The creation of this culture has been achieved with the assistance and inspiration of a book named *The Planet Construction Kit* (Rosenfelder, 2010b), and is a creative process worthy of study in and of itself. However, here we shall only look at an overview which may help us in our quest for their musical expression.

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<sup>11</sup> Which is true of many writers of fantastical fiction as well, which often springs from an unwillingness to follow through on the implications of creation. How thought through is a culture if its system of counting is base 12, and its vocabulary has specific terms for 10, 100 and 1000, yet not for 12, 144 and 1728? If you change one part, you change the whole, and it is this maxim that I want to explore.



## GEOGRAPHY

The *Fimucu* are a relatively small (in number that is) people, spread out over five towns interspersed with numerous specialised villages. They are a landlocked civilisation (no direct access to the sea), in a heavily forested humid subtropical<sup>12</sup> lowland. Two rivers cross their territory, with the largest one crossing their two largest towns. They have a small agricultural production, surpassed by foraging and hunting in quantity, but growing in effectiveness, and in popularity since its consistency is improving. The working of clay is a symbolic and important technology, even though metallurgy<sup>13</sup> has advanced to the working of iron. Metal objects and tools confer status, but there is precious little raw metal in *Fimucu*, thus the maintaining of good relations with neighbouring cultures (especially ones endowed with metal ore) is of great importance, and a tradition of diplomacy, cultural exchange, as well as competitive specialisation has thus been formed<sup>14</sup>.

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The *Fimucu* are organised into a loosely held together theocracy, with the priests as the politically strongest group. There exist several different priesthoods however, and infighting is common. The ‘wise ones’ from each priesthood form an executive council that decide over matters that affect the whole civilisation, but in practice they have little more than moral supremacy. Below them, the travellers have a lot of influence as the main purveyors of news, goods and entertainment. They are not greatly respected, but are always courteously treated. The gatherers, the hunters and the farmers share an equal standing, and are in competitive rivalry over the effectiveness of their respective methods. Tool-making is conferred to specialists within these communities, a position of additional importance. Those who work the river are simultaneously the lowest class and that with greatest symbolical importance. They are reserved a very high religious status, yet their lot is unrewarded, and they are often treated with suspicion.

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<sup>12</sup> Following the Köppen classification system (five categories: A-E) for determining different habitation environments on earth, *humid subtropical* (C) indicates temperatures between 11-25°C, wet winters, no summer drought, and evergreen hardwoods as main vegetation. Can be found in the Azores (Rosenfelder, 2010b:54-60).

<sup>13</sup> The knowledge to work with metals, typically beginning with alloys creating bronze (Coget, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> This could explain the growing influence of agriculture. As agriculture relies more on storage, it is easier to amass much food, and in extension, take control over production, specializing it toward accumulation of status. This is one of many theories as to why agriculture ultimately was chosen in many cultures, despite problems with efficiency and extremely unfavourable working hours (Gillis, Olausson, & Vandkilde, 2004).

The most important social unit is the family, which in *Fimucu* extends to cousins and their spouses. Families, or groupings of families, often take care of one entire region of production, such as a farm or a specific hunting ground. Tasks are distributed between family members after proficiency, and one is expected to stay with one's family. In extreme circumstances a talented young person might request to be adopted by a family active in the trade of their talent. This can be both a source of pride and disconcertion.

Relationships are monogamous, but it is often accepted that a third party joins the family group, either as an amorous partner or additional guardian of children. In general it is the males who are expected to search out a new family.

## SPIRITUALITY

The *Fimucu*'s believe in the symbiosis of water, wood and rock, as elements that form the world. Their religion consists in interpretations of the will of these forces, and is split into the worship of several different gods, each representing different aspects of these primal forces. The two rivers, the surrounding forests and the cultivation of soil as well as pottery are their main avatars<sup>15</sup>. The priesthoods are roughly separated along these lines, but even within one school (such as water) there are different sects. Most sects focus mainly on one aspect of daily life as well as the divine, and most people are thus coupled to a sect according to their profession (fishers follow one god, hunters another, smiths a third).

The main rites and ceremonies during the year are religious, including annual (harvest, spring feast), periodic (flood, drought) and one-time (initiation, sickness, death) occasions. There are also a number of different more secular feasts, often derived from earlier traditions (the *Eyuruy* invasion being one main divider<sup>16</sup>).

Now that we have established some basic facts about the material conditions, social relations and spiritual convictions of the *Fimucu*, we are almost ready to start creating their music culture, but before beginning the creation proper, we shall go through some of the

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<sup>15</sup> Avatar, in this case, means a representation in the physical realm, of an abstract or divine entity/idea.

<sup>16</sup> The *Eyuruy* are a neighbouring people that invaded the *Fimucu* several generations ago, see more under Musical Content.

anthropological theories that have contributed to the organisation of the creation, as well as some practical terminology when discussing the different aspects of music culture.

## Theoretical Background

When defining a civilisation's music culture, one could include an almost infinite amount of parameters, as there are very many things that affect the music being performed.

For example, in a dissertation about the socio-economic contexts of music making in traditional societies, Sorce Keller (2005) goes through several important categories including: Instruments (and their relation to expression, material and technology), Social stratification (and how the structure and rigidity of a society influences its repertoire), Music and money (and the relation with economic systems, and the 'value' of music) as well as Ownership, Genres according to social factors and Urbanism.

These categories are so numerous, and intricate, that there simply is not enough time to cover them all within the scope of this essay. A simplification, regrettable though it is, is needed.

Other approaches put the focus on the rituals including music, and the place they are awarded in the society, as well as the origins and meanings of instruments. Here we can see how symbolism and performance practice gives meaning to both musical forms, as well as instruments and ensembles (Fernando, 2007). It is to be noted, that the way in which a culture classifies their rituals, instruments and musicians is tied to their manner of thinking of music, and reflects the philosophy behind it. It is thus also important, that on top of finding good ways to classify music and instruments as 'objectively' as possible, one must always take into account how the people themselves classify and categorise their own music culture (Kartomi 1990).

The previous section introduced us to the socio-economic background of the *Fimucu*, so now we are looking for the way forward to translating this to music. But before we can reach the purely audible part of music (musical form, or content), we have to consider the way in which it is performed, and on what (performance practice, instruments, musicians). But not only that but also, as Fernando (2007) has pointed out, the situation in which it is performed and the values ascribed the different rites. These can be summarized into three categorising, namely:

## Musical Content – Performance – Situation

Yet, to some extent, that which to me is most interesting in different cultures, is the *idea* of music, the meaning given to it and the power awarded to it. In many ways, you can start to glean the meaning of music in a society through analysing all of the above factors, to try to gain a holistic<sup>17</sup> perspective of the culture and its attitude to music. In essence, by combining what we know about the three previous categories we can get an image of what meaning music has in a culture.

But, since we are not analysing a culture here, but rather creating one, our objective is quite different, even though we may use the same tools. As the goal is to derive a musical content from the culture, we could well inverse the order of these steps:

## Meaning – Situation – Performance – Musical Content

This would also mean that we will move progressively from the abstract to the more and more concrete, starting with the thoughts about music, continuing with the location and reason for music, to the techniques and traditions of performance and finally resulting in the audible end result.

To put it more simply, we are going to answer four questions about the *Fimucu*:

- Why do they perform music?
- When/where do they listen to/perform music?
- How do they perform it? (With what instruments/techniques?)
- How does it sound?

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<sup>17</sup> A fundamental approach in anthropology; focusing on the whole, and the way that everything is connected. It is inclusive in that all cultures, and all facets, must be included to gain a full picture, and integrative in that the relations between the aspects of society and culture are equally important (Kaemmer, 1993:6-7)

# CREATING MUSIC CULTURE

## Meaning

The motivation behind making music is not always clear, even to the people actually performing it. To home in on the motivation, it would be prudent to start with the basic question; what is music? More specifically, what is music to the *Fimucu*?

We begin and we end with religion, in the case of the *Fimucu*'s idea world. At the fundament we have water, wood and rock, being combined and recombined into different elements. These forces are impersonal, implacable and unpredictable. They are too large and powerful to interact with directly. That is why the priesthoods of the *Fimucu* communicate with gods, or spirits, incarnations of one small part of the main force. As an example, the priesthood of the rain are watchers of the skies, interpreters of the meaning of clouds, and the portents of winds. They in turn can combine with the priesthood of the river to divine the length of the coming spring, or maybe the flooding season's high points. Each of these two priesthoods worship a different god, yet they are concerned with the same element (water).

Life, as evidenced in humans and animals, is the sacred combination of the three elements. Combining the body of the earth, the energy of the forest and the spirit of the water, all elements are present and interacting in the living (though which one is most important varies according to which priest you ask).

Clay is the second holy combination of the three, seen as an inanimate representation of the living. It is a combination of earth and water, baptised by fire (an avatar of wood), and subsequently formed to a higher purpose. Much of the visual arts focus on this material, but also a majority of the instruments are made out of clay<sup>18</sup>.

Sound, on the other hand, is seen as a result of movement, either by the elements themselves, or in combination. Water is the loudest of elements, whilst the woods harbour many sounds,

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<sup>18</sup> The importance given to clay is inspired by the value given to it by archaeologists, especially as a part of the supposed Neolithic revolution, which traditionally includes domestication (of animals and plants), permanent settlement and pottery as the main features of the early agrarian societies (Gillis, 2000).

but makes few itself. Stone is the least mobile of the three, but when it does budge it causes an almighty noise. The impetus for creating ‘music’ comes from imitation of these elements<sup>19</sup>, or from an attempt to communicate with them.

Music can thus be seen as a type of prayer, but not one that necessarily speaks directly to the elements themselves. Rather, most prayers are directed at convincing specific avatars of the elements to adapt themselves to the worshippers needs.

Prolonged contact with several different religions (and secular traditions) means that this is not the only music, or idea of music, present among the *Fimucu* however. The tradition of story-telling through song, or accompanied recital comes from their ex-conquerors, the *Eyuruy*. The *Eyuruy*’s tradition of canonising tales means that they have extended traditions of incorporating famous individuals into fantastical stories, in order to entertain, educate and create a sense of community. Some of these song-styles have been adapted unchanged by the *Fimucu*, some have been rejected, and some have been modified into a hybrid form. The most notable case of this is the tradition of fables, moral stories with animals as protagonists, incorporated by certain wood-sects as a means of defining their pantheon of woodland spirits.

To answer the opening question of this segment, music is several things to the *Fimucu*:

- It is prayer, a way to communicate with the avatars of the elements.
- It is entertainment that relaxes, brings pleasure, and creates social ties.
- It is education, spiritual or secular; a useful means of imparting knowledge of the world.

## Situation

What are the rituals or rites that include, or are based on, music? In the real world there is no end to the variety of musical situations, ranging from initiations, to seasonal feasts, personal praise and individual, as well as communal, expressions of emotions or spirituality. We

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that this is the religious interpretation among the *Fimucu*. Whether or not imitation, expression, communication or an extension of movement lies at the origin of the first sound-making, is a question worth exploring separately. For the *Fimucu* we have to assume that a tradition of making sound already existed, and that a gradual evolution has given rise to this concept of imitation of the elements.

already know a bit about the ceremonies present in the *Fimucu* culture, so now we have to define which among them are musically interesting.

### *FIMUCU* MUSIC COMPLEXES

Let us consider what type of music complexes that may exist among the *Fimucu*. As we have established that ceremonies often are religious in nature, we can assume that they are also grouped after the main philosophical schools (water, wood and rock). It would be interesting to look closer at ceremonies from two different schools, as well as an example of non-religious music activity, performed by travelling entertainers.

First I have imagined a number of the different ceremonies and music complexes that might exist among the *Fimucu*. I have taken inspiration from the work done by Nathalie Fernando (2007) in determining a culture's musical identity from studying their ensembles, and their calendar of musical occasions.

In creating this table I have tried to take into account different kinds of ceremonies that might possibly be put to music by the *Fimucu*. These range from individual celebrations (such as the initiation into adulthood), family celebrations (such as a birth, or a good hunt/harvest) to large scale communal events (such as the turning of the seasons). Since they are a considerably religious people, many of the important ceremonies during a year are led by priests or their acolytes (apprentices), there are however several more secular forms of music that co-exist. It is important to note here that these are not the only music complexes that exist, as there are many more that appear less frequently during the year, as well as more local ceremonies in different towns and villages. These are a mere sampling to give an idea of what different kinds of music may exist among the *Fimucu*.

The rituals have all been given names<sup>20</sup>, a short description and/or translation, as well as a classification according to Kaemmer's definition of music complexes. I've also outlined who the participants (that is to say the performers) of each ritual are and which spiritual school

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<sup>20</sup> More about the language of the *Fimucu* in the Musical Content section

they are considered to be a part of. This is important, as different priesthoods are responsible for different ceremonies, and some are even contested, either being shared or alternated between several priesthoods. Those labelled ‘Life’ are the only ceremonies where all three priesthoods cooperate regularly. Finally, I have also included the rituals’ origins, since this might give a clue to what instruments and musical forms might be employed. Here one is confronted with several new names, including both *Fimucu*’s neighbours (*Eyuruy*, *Chsoha*) and internal ethnic groups (*Ehfvu*, *Niuk*, *Kintht*) as well as an extinct cultural predecessor (*Nija*). It is very important to include this element of cultural mingling, since no civilisation exists in a vacuum, and many cultural advancements are made through contact with other ideas<sup>21</sup>. They are thus introduced as a sort of perturbation, that interrupt and change the purely *Fimucu* cultural ideals.

**Fig 2.1** Musical Rituals among the *Fimucu*

<b>Rituals</b>	<b>Description/ translation</b>	<b>Complex</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Origin</b>
<i>unma misse</i>	Tales - myths	Individual	Singer + musicians	Entertainment	<i>Eyuruy</i>
<i>eúrene Nksemi</i>	Tales - fables	Individual	Singer + musicians	Entertainment	<i>Eyuruy</i>
<i>karam misse</i>	Tales - political/historical	Individual	Singer + community + musicians	Entertainment	<i>Multiple</i>
<i>mehenna Msekasi</i>	Pregnancy-blessing	Contractual	priests of all three schools	Life	<i>Fimucu (Ehfvu)</i>
<i>inniszem kansaú</i>	Birth-celebration	Communal	priests, the family, musicians	Life	<i>Fimucu (Ehfvu)</i>
<i>eszahNse amene</i>	Finding new ground	Contractual	Lead priests + acolytes, families	Rock	<i>Fimucu (Kintht)</i>
<i>nerimsanu</i>	Women's initiation (farmers)	Individual Communal	Subject + group of elders (4 play)	Rock, Water	<i>Fimucu (Niuk)</i>
<i>ursaúvise eneMka emin</i>	Steering the flood	Communal	Priests and community	Water	<i>Fimucu (Nija)</i>
<i>rurum epaú</i>	Ceremony of Time	Communal	Priests and acolytes	Water, Wood	<i>Fimucu (recent)</i>
<i>uánu kereksi</i>	Initiation of hunters	Communal Individual	Subject + Hunters	Wood	<i>Chsoha, Ehfvu</i>
<i>rerek amVri</i>	Preparing the hunt	Communal	Hunters + Families	Wood	<i>Fimucu (Ehfvu)</i>

<sup>21</sup> In his short introduction to cultural history, Ory (2007) covers this reasoning quite succinctly.



Now that we have an overview of different ceremonies, it is time to look closer at some samples, namely *ursaúvise eneMka emin* (a communal religious complex, occurring regularly within the Water-sect), *eszahNze amene* (a contractual complex, occurring at intervals when a farm must be moved, performed by the Rock-sect) and *eúrene Nksesi* (an individual complex, occurring at irregular intervals as entertainment, performed by travelling musicians or local specialists).

### *‘ursaúvise eneMka emin’ - Steering the flood (water)*

In an attempt to persuade the rivers to flood less or more, earlier or later depending on the current needs, several melodies are known by the habitants of the river banks. Consultation would often have to be made with a specialist upon which melody should be performed, and at what time, but ultimately it would be the community who perform the music, and the accompanying dance.

Musically, these are interesting because of form. Having developed from a highly improvisational idea of increasing and decreasing, crescendo and diminuendo, it has now been formalised into four very specific formal parts. These are:

#### *Scarcity – Increase – Plenty – Decrease*

Depending on when the ritual would be performed one could either begin with the scarcity or the plenty segment, but it is imperative that all four are played. If the entirety of the circle is not performed, the flow of the river has not been respected, and the ritual will fail.

Continuum is the watchword for *Fimucu*'s understanding of the river. It is ever-present, ever-flowing and ever-changing. According to the sects of the rivers, the river is the world, and the water is the time that moves through it, carrying all life and nature with it.

Musically, the ceremony of *Steering the flood*, tries to represent the constant nature of the river, as well as incarnating the ebb and flow of the floods.

*'eszahNze amene' - Finding new ground (rock)*

This contractual music complex occurs when a family needs to move their agricultural plot (this would happen once every 8-9 years because of soil fatigue<sup>22</sup>). The priesthood of agriculture would have to be called, and one of their priestesses would lead the chanting as a search for a new plot would commence. When a prospective place was found, a representative would have to approve it as sanctioned by their divinity, before cultivating could begin again. Musically this would be done through singing by the lead priestess, while the affected family would keep time with instruments devised of, or inspired by agricultural implements.

The ritual consists of three different, quite separate, parts. The blessing of the old ground (to ensure future prosperity, and a possibility to return), the invocation of the search (to aid with visions or clues as to where one could find the next workable plot) and the assessment of the new land. The last two parts might at some occasions be repeated several times, as the ground might be assessed as not good enough, and then the search would have to recommence. It is one of the most respected skills of a rock-priestess to be able to find and assess good ground.

Musically, the three parts could be categorised as follows:

- *Blessing*: A chant lead by the priestess, with the families joining in, accompanied by groups of percussionists.
- *Search*: An invocation recited by the priestess, alternating with flute melodies by those who coordinate the search. The search could be more or less staged depending on the priestess's skill; they have most often already scouted out a likely site, and the ritual serves to lead the families there.
- *Assessment*: Here there is no singing, rather the priestess meditated sitting on the ground, and the families attempt to assist by providing a percussive, trance-like background utilising instruments with a close connection to the earth.

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<sup>22</sup> Meaning when the ground has been over-cultivated, and has been depleted of minerals and other nutrients. This varies greatly between different kinds of earths. (Rosenfelder, 2010b:89)

*'eúrene Nksesi' - Tales (fables)*

The travelling merchants that visit most towns often entertain with songs and tales, both indigenous and foreign. This practice has now been adopted so that among villagers there are sometimes someone who learns the songs and the instruments to keep people entertained even in absence of merchants. This occurs more often among those concerned with gathering or hunting, since they generally have more free time<sup>23</sup>.

The *fables* are most often stories based on animal-myths, and have come largely from the *Eyuruy* people, who invaded and held the land of the *Fimucu* a handful of generations ago. They alternate between describing relations between the animals, and using the different animals as metaphors for human behaviour. Often here is a large humorous element to the songs.

The fables tend to follow a convention in narrative, where a first verse establishes the part of the wood where the story takes place, the following three verses describe the main animal protagonist, and finally five verses recount the specific story.

Location (1 verse) – Protagonist (3 verses) – Story (5 verses)

Sometimes the story is interrupted with a couple of verses describing the other major characters in the setting. Sometimes these secondary characters get appropriated into a new story, and thus get their own song.

We have defined three different, but integral, musical occasions that an average *Fimucu* might encounter regularly, and it is time to inspect how, and with what, they are actually performing. We will return for a closer look at one of these three music complexes once we have examined the instruments and vocal techniques used by the *Fimucu*.

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<sup>23</sup> The debate about the effectiveness of early agriculture often highlights this fact. (Gillis et al., 2004)

## Performance

As we now know some of the situations within which the *Fimucu* perform music, it is time to take a closer look at the performers themselves, and later on their means of expression.

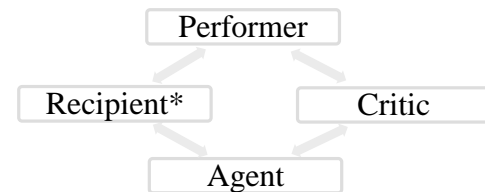
Who is the musician, and who is the audience? Where do you draw the line?

We need to define the different roles in the musical situation, and once again the terminology of Kaemmer serves our purposes (1993:44-57):

**Fig 1.3** Social roles in music (Kaemmer, 1993:49-57)

The performer, is quite simply the musician; the person or persons who participate in the creation of music. These can be further subdivided into:

Professionals (gain their living on music, and can perform it full-time), Specialists (also called semi-professionals; combine musical activity with another occupation) and Non-specialists (perform music only occasionally, or under exceptional circumstances).



The recipient<sup>24</sup> is the listener, for whose benefit the music is played. May include those for whom a spiritual ritual is performed, as well as the traditional concept of audience, and the ‘consumer’ who buys recordings of music. The agent is the person who is responsible for the practical organisation of the musical occasion, and can be anyone from the musicians themselves, family or assistants to the original requestor or the agent (in the music establishment milieu).

The critic can be important as the person/s who engage in discourse about the music, attempting to define the ideological essence as well as the legitimate traditions in performance practice and technique. Can often be merged with one of the other social roles.

Among the *Fimucu*, we find mostly specialist musicians, either priests with training in ritual music, or gifted workers who spend leisure time perfecting their craft. Extremely few professional musicians exist, and are in those rare cases tied to the biggest sects or the wealthiest merchants.

<sup>24</sup> Here I have changed Kaemmer’s terminology out of ideological difference. The original term was *consumer*. This group can in turn be further subdivided, as has been done by Adorno (1994) into different types of listeners.

The layout of social roles present at any given ceremony differs, and we will discuss it closer as we take a more detailed look at our three example ceremonies. Suffice it to say that the main critics and agents are priests and their acolytes, with recipients from all classes, except for the tradition of reciting tales.

So, which are the means of expression available to these specialist musicians?

## THE VOICE

The first and most natural instrument available to human beings can be suspected of also being the first used in musical activity. However, one could easily imagine a culture within which singing is not considered part of music, but rather a variation of speech or even an extension of movement.<sup>25</sup> For the purposes of the *Fimucu* however, singing can be considered to be at the heart of musical expression.

What type of singing then? In the tripartite world view thus far presented (an interaction of water, wood and rock) we have learned that musical thought is geared towards imitation, or communication with these elements.

## Pitch, Grain and Noise

Being raised in a predominantly western musical tradition, the preoccupation with pitch and harmony is almost inescapable<sup>26</sup>. Music being defined as melody (consisting of fixed relations between pitches) can seem so natural, that it is difficult to think of any other paradigm as powerful. When attempting to describe development of musical thought, many scholars fall very easily into describing the evolution of scales and harmonic systems<sup>27</sup>. While that is one aspect with merit, it is by no means the only important musical development. To move away from this line of thinking, we shall look to other ways of thinking.

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<sup>25</sup> As the concept of *Ginga*, a style of walking, that forms both music culture as well as philosophy among certain peoples in Brazil (Laplantine, 2005)

<sup>26</sup> Compare it to being raised in a culture where the main focus lies in the rhythm, for example.

<sup>27</sup> This can be evidenced in formal history-writing (Wellesz (Ed.), 1991) as well as attempts at describing musical evolution (Maurin, 1992)

So, our *Fimucu* do place a great significance in singing, and let us assume that they do not do so at only one pitch, something that only one observed culture has been known to do<sup>28</sup>.

Hence, there will be pitch variation, but does it have to be the main impetus of the melody? Could it not just as well be an uncontrolled result of the main parameter? Let us consider this possibility:

The *Fimucu* base their melodies, not on pitch, but rather on timbre, on the grain present in the voice, and a melodies' identity is based on this rather than a progression of notes. This would mean that a melody sung by two different people would have vastly different pitches involved, based on the singers' vocal range. A melody might be defined like this:

**Fig 3.1** Basic melody



Here eight-notes and quarter-notes stand for a relative value of short and long (not necessarily with a proportion of 1:2). The cross notes (x) represent non-voiced, whispered syllables, slashed noteheads (♩) a strained tone (as in a very high volume or register), the diamond noteheads (♩) very flat singing, as in the highest registers, and the normal noteheads (♩) what we would consider melodious singing.

This could then be interpreted with very varying methods, they may even have different schools of interpretation, where one sees strain as coupled with register (i.e. low (hollow), medium (full), high (strained), falsetto (flat)). Another could couple this solely to technique, applicable in almost any register (whispering, vibrato, grain of voice, growling and flautando).

The first one would yield a different result, depending on the singer, yet with consistencies in personal register:

<sup>28</sup> The Alacalufe, living in the Chilean Patagonia. Even after centuries of contact with occidental tradition, they still only varied 3 cents in one song (Maurin, 1992:22)

Fig 3.2 The melody of Fig 3.1, in different interpretations

The figure displays three musical staves, each representing a different interpretation of the same melody. The top staff is labeled 'High' and uses a treble clef. The middle staff is labeled 'Middle-low' and uses a bass clef. The bottom staff is labeled 'High-wide' and uses a treble clef. Each staff shows a sequence of notes with stems and beams, and includes 'x' marks below the notes to indicate specific intervals or techniques. The 'High' staff shows a melody with large intervals, the 'Middle-low' staff shows a melody with smaller intervals, and the 'High-wide' staff shows a melody with wide intervals.

Here, we see the same melody sung by a singer with a high-pitched voice, one with a medium-pitched voice, and someone with the same register as the first one, but wider, possibly more trained in singing. Note that in such a construction the intervals would appear as an effect of the register of the singer. If the singer has a voice spanning two octaves, the leaps might be wider than those of one with a voice spanning one and a half.

Singing can thus display a vast array of different interpretation, at least to western ears, of the same melody. It has a specific focus on timbre, and vocal technique, and includes the ability of anyone to sing. Pitch organisation seems to be less important, and might rather be a facet of their instrumental music.

## INSTRUMENTS

The evolution of instruments, and consequently music, is highly dependent and in symbiosis with the development of technology (Ory, 2007; Kartomi, 1990). Technological process makes new materials and manufacturing techniques available, and musical experimentation may in turn reveal both acoustic as well as extra-musical aspects of the materials treated.<sup>29</sup> Consider the findings of Cro-Magnon remain in echoing caves in southern France; complexes of stalagmites and stalactites show sign of repeated systematic blunt trauma (hits with a blunt

<sup>29</sup> The relation is never that simple however, and the mediation between music and material is fit subject for several studies, much more thorough than this essay. (DeNora, 2003)

tool), suggesting both possible structural concerns, but above all a musical experimentation with timbre and resonance (Coget, 2000:10-23).

When devising the available instruments for our culture, the *Fimucu*, we shall depart from two different directions. The intent when making the instrument, and the materials available when doing so. They are often related, as an instrument maker will try to choose the best material for his purpose, yet there will always be a necessary mediation between the material and the idea.

The classification of instruments tell us a lot about a culture's idea of music and its practice, and we will make a sketch of the *Fimucu* classification system based on what we know.

First, we have to decide the main dividing factor. This can be any, from the occidental focus on morphology and means of playing, Javanese focus on ensembles (Kartomi, 1990), or the Ouldémé's<sup>30</sup> division based on the different musical occasions of the season (Fernando, 2007). The strong focus among the *Fimucu* on the spiritual division of elements suggests that this may be important, at least for religious music. Let us envision then, three main categories based on which spiritual sect they most seem to belong to (plus the secular category, entertainment):

Rock – Water – Wood – (Entertainment)

As previously mentioned, clay is an important material, and that the *Fimucu* have a tradition of making clay instruments. Among these may be flutes, drums, pot-drums, rattles, trumpets, stringed instruments and combinations of all of the above (Hall, 2010).

In addition to the clay instruments, there may well be rock-based percussion, as well as flutes and drums built in wood, and/or animal bones/horns. This would fit with the spiritual sects; there might even be some instruments played or affected by water. The farming section of the rock spiritualists might well have devised instruments out of vegetables and plants as well<sup>31</sup>.

It is thus time to imagine some instruments, maybe even invent them, based on real world inspiration. I have based my categorisations on Kartomi's (1990) study on classifications, and taken inspiration from several sources, both historical and recent, to devise this list.

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<sup>30</sup> An indigenous people in northern Cameroun

<sup>31</sup> Like the festival in Nice (France), who focus on their locally grown gourds (*cougourdon niçoise*), creating entire orchestras with instruments made from them (Coget, 1996).



Fig 2.2 Musical Instruments among the *Fimucu*

Name	Description	Class.	Complexes used in	Technique	Different Sizes	Element	Matter	Origin
<i>Oyoha</i>	Cylindrical skin-covered drum	membrano-	<i>eúrene Nkési</i>	thumb, fingers, palm	2 Large	Entertainment	Clay, Skin	<i>Eyuruy</i>
<i>Rischt</i>	Plucked 5-stringed harp	chordo-	<i>eúrene Nkési</i>	plucking		Entertainment	Wood, tendons	<i>Chsoha</i>
<i>Naku</i>	Beaten Gourd	idio-	<i>karam misse, eszahnze amene</i>	fingers, palm	Many, 3 major	Rock	Gourd	<i>Fimucu (Niwk)</i>
<i>Izses</i>	Gourd shaker with seeds inside	shaken idio-(rattle)	<i>usaúvise eneMka ermin</i>	shaking, palm		Rock	Gourd, Seeds	<i>Fimucu (Niwk)</i>
<i>Usa</i>	Flute Family	æro-	<i>inniszem kansaú, nerimsanu</i>	breath, fingers	L, M, S	Rock	Clay	<i>Fimucu</i>
<i>Szernsze</i>	Clay shaker	shaken idio-(rattle)	<i>eszahnze amene</i>	shaking	One size	Rock	Clay, Seeds	<i>Fimucu (Kinht)</i>
<i>Ikui</i>	Flute	æro-	<i>mehenna Msekasi</i>	breath, fingering	One size	Rock, Water	Clay	<i>Fimucu (Ehfvu)</i>
<i>Aúnup</i>	Clay vessel (two holes); percussion instrument	idio- plosive æro-	<i>mehenna Msekasi, inniszem kansaú, eszahnze amene, nerimsanu, usaúvise eneMka ermin, uánu kereksi</i>	fingers, palm	L, 2 M, 2 S	Rock, Water	Clay	<i>Fimucu (Ehfvu)</i>
<i>Msen</i>	Cylindrical 'trumpet'	æro-	<i>inniszem kansaú</i>	breath	M, S	Rock, Water	Clay	<i>Fimucu (Kinht)</i>
<i>Aúnufé</i>	<i>Aúnup</i> s with three resonance bodies	idio- plosive æro-	<i>inniszem kansaú, usaúvise eneMka ermin, rurum epaú</i>	finger, palm	4 M, 3S	Water	Clay	<i>Fimucu (Ehfvu)</i>
<i>Nnuf</i>	Water-filled whistles	æro-	<i>usaúvise eneMka ermin</i>	just blowing	15 diff.	Water	Clay	<i>Nija</i>
<i>Kea</i>	Cylindrical 'trumpet'	æro-	<i>usaúvise eneMka ermin, rurum epaú</i>	circular breathing	S	Water, Wood	Clay	<i>Nija</i>
<i>Kuzue</i>	Flute Family (complex fingerings)	æro-	<i>mehenna Msekasi, eszahnze amene</i>	fingerings	3 (M-S)	Wood	Wood	<i>Fimucu (Ehfvu)</i>
<i>Inimka</i>	Flute	æro-	<i>uánu kereksi, rerek amVri</i>	breath, bend, fingering	infinite(s)	Wood	Bone	<i>Chsoha</i>
<i>Nieye</i>	Single-reed instrument	æro-	<i>unma misse, rerek amVri</i>	breath, bursts, overblowing		Wood	Wood	<i>Eyuruy</i>
<i>Kunshoy</i>	Skin-covered goblet drum	membrano-plosive æro-	<i>unma misse, karam misse, rurum epaú, uánu kereksi, rerek amVri</i>	thumb, fingers, palm, scraping	3 M, S	Wood, Rock	Clay, Skin	<i>Eyuruy</i>

This table includes the instrument names (in the language of the *Fimucu*), a description and their classification in the Hornbostel-Sachs system, consisting of idiophones (e.g. marimba), membranophones (e.g. all types of drums), chordophones (e.g. violins and guitars) and aerophones (all winds). Additionally I have also added all the music complexes within which the instrument is used, as well as the principal techniques of playing, and the different sizes that may exist of the same type of instrument. Finally, just as with the music complexes themselves, I have assigned all instruments to a spiritual school, designated their main construction material, and clarified their culture of origin.

In this way, we can tell that the *Nieye* is a single-reed instrument (like the clarinet, thus making it an aerophone), that exists in only one size. It is used in the E1 and Wo2 rituals, and is made of wood (and subsequently classed as part of that element's family). Lastly, we can see that there are several different traditional playing techniques (normal breath, strong bursts and overblowing), and that the instrument originally came from the *Eyuruy* culture.

This gives us, just as with the ceremonies, an overview of the available material, and I will now closer examine three instruments, namely the *Aúnup* (clay ‘drum’), the *Szemsze* (clay shaker) and the *Kuzue* (family of flutes made out of wood), to give us an impression of how they are made and played.

### *Aúnup*

One of the backbones of the *Fimucu* ensembles, being present in most important formations, this percussion instrument has much in common with the *Udu* of east Nigeria<sup>32</sup>.

It is a round clay vessel, with two resonance holes (imagine a carafe, with an extra hole at the rounded bottom). It is played by alternating precise strikes with fingers and knuckles, with the slapping of the ‘bass’-hole with the palm of the other hand (the compression of air producing a low ‘boom’). Skilled players can produce several different low notes, and manipulate them as well, and ensembles often include up to five *Aúnups* of varying sizes to give a full range of possibilities.

Rhythms are often based on *accelerando* or *diminuendo*, favouring quick tremolos with the fingers interspersed with the foundation of low ‘booms’. In the tale telling a more cyclical rhythm pattern is adopted, where a slow pulsation can be felt.

### *Szemsze*

A heritage from the *Niuk* region of *Fimucu*, this instrument is actually a replication of an agricultural implement. Traditionally, small cylindrical seed-boxes are built with many small holes in them; this so that a farmer can casually distribute seeds over the soil in an even manner, shaking them out of the holes<sup>33</sup>. The *Szemsze* is simply one of these object, minus the holes, which brings out the wonderful grainy percussion that we usually associate with the maracas.

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<sup>32</sup> A traditional instrument, made of clay with two resonant holes.

<sup>33</sup> Inspired by the seed dispenser, as used in 18<sup>th</sup> century England (Osborne and Lorimer, 2009)

It has gained spiritual importance with the consolidation of the *Fimucu* religion, and according to some sects symbolises the fertilisation of the ground itself, and is therefore essential in certain agricultural rituals.

In terms of playing techniques, the instrument is quite limited, as differentiation in articulation is quite subtle, and the performer is pretty much limited to two choices; shaking it in the air, or hitting against something solid, preferably the palm or leg. It is effective at creating ambiances and upholding rhythmic patterns however, and when employed in large groups it can create a very soothing effect (or chaotic depending on the group).

### *Kuzue*

In many ways one of the virtuoso instruments of the *Fimucu*, this family of flutes are reserved to those priests and laymen deemed exceptionally musically gifted. The *kuzue* come in many different sizes, and it is often the musicians themselves that produce them, in preparation for special ceremonies. It is a mark of their status that their use is restricted to the *eszahNze amene* and L1 ceremonies, in many ways the key blessings for the *Fimucu*; the unborn child, and the newly cultivated land.

There are several schools of performance, and they each have their preferred flutes, scales and timbre. The schemes and scales of two principal schools are presented below:

- The *inimis Nkse* (school A) focus on the imitation of bird song, valuing agility and incisiveness in their players. The focus lies not on single notes, but on figures, and making them stand out, attract attention, yet seem natural.
- The *ursesi aúvine* (school B) find their inspiration in the wind. Sustained, manipulated sonorities are sought after, and a sensitivity of embouchure, coupled with a sense for the dramatic mark the expert player.

**Fig 3.3** Scales and examples of musical phrases from *Kuzue* schools A and B.



## Musical Content

At this point, we have a number of sounds (at least abstractly imagined), as well as instrumental and vocal techniques. But how did they all come together in what a *Fimucu* native might call music? To follow the paradigms of occidental musical thinking, we have been introduced to some elements of scales (the *inimka*-flute), some rhythmic patterns (the *aúnup*) and some rules for sung melody. But now we need to examine the musical phrase, and to fully do that, we would need to examine the language of the *Fimucu*, and how it might be connected to their musical expression.

### HISTORY AND LANGUAGE

Up until this point we have seen isolated words, giving us a sensation for what the *Fimucu* language may look like, written in the Roman alphabet. We have also encountered some of the ethnical diversity present, and been introduced to at least one major historical event that has affected the relationship between peoples. A full history, as well as a complete language, falls way beyond the scope of this essay, but I shall endeavour to clarify the major influences that may have changed *Fimucu* culture, music and language.

In very brief summary, the *Fimucu* includes three main ethnic groups; the *Ehfvu*, the largest group, come from the South, South-East; the *Kintht*, who are politically very close to the *Ehfvu*, but have a different heritage, residing in the now extinct country of *Nija*; the *Niuk*, a predominantly agricultural people, who had no real contact with the other two before the *Eyuruy* invasion.

The *Eyuruy*, are an agricultural people, situated to the north-west of *Fimucu*, who invaded and occupied the land approximately 250 years ago, the most traumatic historic event of the contemporary *Fimucu* people. They're previously imperialistic ambitions were cut short by infighting, and they are now significantly diminished in power. The breakdown of the *Eyuruy* did however lead to a unification of the disparate *Fimucu* societies in the struggle for independence, also resulting in a streamlining of their spirituality, and the rise of the priesthoods.

This has contributed greatly to the evolution of languages; as the political borders changed, the dominant power tried to assert its dominance, and the language has been one primary tool. As we now look closer at the structure of the language, it may be important to keep it in mind.

– *Msatah aú? Kuászuktah!*

– *Ivrozetah enevanh uhpu nuá!*

(trans. – What are you doing? Come [here]! – I don't want to be forced [by you] to eat fish!)

These example sentences gives us several interesting aspects of the *Fimucu* language to explore. Musically, our first point of interest is the rhythm and emphasis of the phrases. First of all, the stress (or accent) of *Fimucu* speech lies naturally on the first syllable (*msata*, *ivrozetah*, *enevahn*). However, they have combinations of vowels (*eú*, *aú*, *uá*) that have an emphasis on the second sound, which makes them exceptions to this rule. The accents are marked with change of tone, as well as a light lengthening of the syllable, and could be written in notation as follows:

Fig 3.4 Notation of normal speech pattern among the *Fimucu*

M - sa - tah      a - ú?      Ku - ás - zuk - tah!

Iv - ro - ze - tah      e - ne - vanh      uh - pu      nu - á!

In terms of melody, they stress the first syllable, and the first one in every sentence exceptionally so, but there are irregularities. Where do these irregularities come from, and how do they affect understanding?

To come to terms with this, we will have to look at meaning, and thus a more precise translation. We have, in order of appearance, a question, an imperative (command) and a statement of will (in this case defiant). Here is an attempt at a more literal translation:

*Msa – ta – h*                      *aú?*

(to)do – you – [present]      what?

*Ku – ászuk – ta – h!*

[imperative] – come(here) – you – [present]!

*Ivroze – ta – h*                      *enevanh*      *uhpu*                      *nuá!*

Force|me–you–[present]      to|eat                      fish                      not|want

The first confusing thing is the sentence order; the order in which we place the subject (S), verb (V) and object (O) in a sentence. In English (and Swedish) the SVO order is used (i.e. *I (S) ate (V) the fish (O)*), whereas in the language of the *Fimucu*, VSO is used (*enevark rho uhpu* = ate I the fish)<sup>34</sup>. This would indicate an even greater importance on the first sound, both in every word, as well as in every sentence, as the action being described has precedence over all else.

<sup>34</sup> This is the order used in, among others, Welsh and Arabic. (Rosenfelder 2010a:84)

A few other interesting remarks that can be made from these examples:

*-h* indicates the present tense (that which happens in the now)

*ku-* indicates the imperative form (a command)

*aú* and *nuá* mean *what* and *not want* respectively; particles that change the meaning of the sentence, and major exceptions to the stress rule (stress on the second sound).

*-ta* is the normal conjugation of a verb in the second person singular (you); the pronoun *you* is not necessary because of this, and evidently seldom used.

*aszuk* is the root form of *come(here)*; its conjugation is achieved by adding prefixes and/or suffixes that indicate intention (*ku-*), person (*-ta*) and time (*-h*).

In summary, we have a language where great emphasis is put on the beginning of words and sentences, with an agglutinating verb structure (prefixes and suffixes are added to the verbs to indicate time, person and direction), VSO sentence order and several small particles that can change the meaning of sentences (and are for this reason awarded extra emphasis).

We can add to this the fractured history of the region, and conclude that most probably there will be many loan words, and maybe even structures taken from neighbouring languages, as indeed we can see if we observe the instrument names that include words that do not follow the general melody of the *Fimucu*.

However, all *Fimucu* music is not the same, and there might be some very great difference between the different music complexes' traditions. Because of this, we shall look closer at one of the three musical situations previously discussed.

### *Steering the flood* – (Blessing)

In conclusion, we shall take part of a description of one of the *Fimucu*'s rituals, namely the first part of the triad that constitute the *eszahNze amene*, or ritual of finding new land.

The *Blessing* takes place after a conclave of priests has deemed a land unfit for continued cultivation, and is the first step in the process of moving a number of agricultural families from their homes to a new plot of land. The ritual itself goes as follows:

*The priestess stands alone in the middle of the plot, awaiting the arrival of her acolytes. They arrive slowly, five of them, leading the families of the land with them. Each acolyte carries a kuzue and an aúrup, and the farmers all have szemszes in their hands.*

*A rear-guard of gifted adolescents bring nakus of different sizes.*

*As the congregation reaches the borders of the plot, the acolytes each start to play a slow pulse on their aúrups. They are not synchronised, and the pulsations soon start to disorient the ear. They start spreading out across the land, each being followed by a group of farmers.*

*The separate beats mount slowly in volume, but not in speed. As the acolytes reach their positions, they form an oval-shaped pentagon around the priestess who still hasn't moved.*

*When the acolytes stop, the families start to shake their szemszes, all the while continuing to circle, more and more independently. They begin by taking up the pulse of the acolyte nearest to them, but as they move around the priestess, their rhythms mingle, and each will follow the pulse that they feel, regardless of those around them. As the curtain of rattling descends, ever-moving, upon the priestess, the adolescents form a tighter circle around her, preparing their gourds. Not until the priestess begins her chant do they strike their instruments.*

*The ground is shaking with the vibrations, and now, the priestess begins her litany. It is a slow chant, performed in the old language of the Niuk, known only to those with ancestors from the northern region. As she recites the incantations, blessing and thanking the cultivated soil, the adolescents start to play. They are eager, and they have been patient, and their role is very important this day. They are those who are still growing, those who still benefit from the lands blessing, and they are playing the instruments of the ground, vegetables grown on this very land. As they play, the priestess raises her chant, and the intensity grows.*

*As the litany is recounted, verse after verse, the music ebbs and flows, gradually phasing out the aúrups, as the adolescents play louder and faster. As the final verse reaches its end, long breathy notes arise from the acolytes' kuzues, as though from a distant wind that's coming closer. As the last words of the blessing are intoned, the drums die down, the szemszes stop one by one, but the notes from the kuzues are held. They will carry over into the next part of the ceremony: the search.*



This more detailed narrative of a *Fimucu* ritual, gives us an insight to the workings of their ceremonies, but it is complementary at best, as the ritual can be maintained for over two hours, and include many more subtle details than can be described in this text. To conclude, a transcription of a part of this music into occidental notation might look something like this:

Fig 3.5 Transcription of excerpt from the *Blessing* ritual, first part of the *Finding new land ceremony*.

The figure displays a musical transcription of an excerpt from the *Blessing* ritual. It is organized into three main sections:

- Aúnups Section:** This section consists of five staves. The first staff contains a melodic line with a measure marked  $\approx 45$ . The second staff has a measure marked  $\approx 30$ . The third staff features a measure marked  $\approx 34$  with a triplet of eighth notes. The fourth staff has a measure marked  $\approx 17$ . The fifth staff contains a measure marked  $\approx 42$ . Each of these measures is enclosed in a box, and a large arrow points to the right from the end of the fifth staff.
- Szászes Section:** This section consists of five staves, each filled with a dense, repetitive rhythmic pattern of notes. A large arrow points to the right from the end of the third staff.
- Aúnups Section (Summary):** This section is a summary of the first Aúnups section, showing the five staves with their respective boxed measures and a large arrow pointing to the right.

A double slash symbol is located between the first and second sections.

# REFLECTION

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

In creation, at least my creation, there are many forces within me that vie for influence over that which is created. I express myself, and this essay is no exception, but what part of myself is it that is expressed? To make a dramatic simplification of the inner struggle, one might describe key aspects of my personality somewhat like this:

The dreamer, imagining worlds beyond the real, and wishing itself away and in. Seeking transcendence, immersion and extension of the conscience, beyond the quantifiable.

The musicologist, trying to understand and analyse, categorise and classify; summarizing the world and its music into information, which can be quantified.

and

The composer, seeking to express that which has impressed; subverting, inverting and converting experience; seeking solutions to the scars between the real and the unreal.

Each of these three instincts has guided my writing, influenced my creation, and directed my thinking, in this project more than ever. For it is the dreamer that gives the impulse, the will to go beyond and imagine. The musicologist (or scientist) seeks to bring reasons to these raved imaginings, seeks to ground them in facts and knowledge. The composer is the last piece, which in turn has to piece together the ideas and the facts into one (more or less coherent) whole.

They stem from my different experiences; as an avid reader, listener, watcher and player of fantasy and science fiction; as a student in archaeology, cultural history and musicology; as an artist, pianist, singer and composer.

In terms of these different instincts, this project has also been many different things, and served different purposes, in my continued search for creative purpose.

It has been demanding. It has required extensive studying, and introduced a great many facts, as well as theories of thought, that have had to be understood, processed and somehow made sense of.

It has been educational. All of these schools of thought have formed, or begun to form, my own thinking. I have been introduced (ever so briefly) to the fields of ethnomusicology and musical anthropology<sup>35</sup>, and have found that they are subject of great interest, that I look forward to pursue in greater detail.

It has been stimulating. For the first prolonged period of time since I have begun studying music earnestly, I have had the opportunity to focus my creative efforts on an equally stimulant, yet separate field. This has freed my mind, and opened new connections in my thinking, but it is not an isolated work. The grounding in music culture has meant that this departure in thinking has had to constantly give feedback to my musical creativity, stimulating new ideas, and inspiring me to make other music.

It has been unsatisfactory. Even though it has been an exciting, engrossing project, it simply wasn't extensive enough. I set out with a goal to create a music culture, and have managed to create the barest skeleton; an interesting way to see the structures that lie beneath the surface, but ultimately a very dry experience. The lack of real musical material has been my greatest setback, reducing the essay to a rather theoretical hypothesis. I am very pleased with the result so far, but can nevertheless feel that I wish I could have done more.

It has been a start.

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<sup>35</sup> And have hopefully managed to introduce at least one of these fields to the reader as well.

## Continuation

The ways forward are many.

For the dreamer, I have created a new world, with innumerable unexplored valleys and peaks. One way forward would simply be to continue the creation; evolve the *Fimucu* into a fully complex and deep civilisation, complete the invention of their language, history and religion, follow the lives of their citizens and describe the world within which they move.

For the musicologist, the library has been opened, and after that, the world is my book. The writings of musicologists both old and new have been revealed to me, and I have much left to learn. And once that appetite has been sated (if, indeed, it can be), the real study begins, for it is in the interaction between people and their cultures that the real learning is found.

For the composer, well, one can quite simply consider this essay as the most comprehensive preparatory work for a composition completed that I have completed thus far. All of the musical forms (and instruments, if I get a clay-burning oven) are open to use, indeed the material is begging to be composed with. And once tired of enacting the rituals of an imagined people, the new musical expressions can be integrated into my other musical output, and new worlds may result from the clash.

In many ways, this is a never-ending project. It could even be called a calling...

...if I choose to listen.

Born into cultures, three instead of one

A part of three worlds, while embracing none

Somehow apart from all cultures known

It is but expected, that I make my own.

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