

**The indigenous music of East Timor and its relationship to the social and cultural mores and *lulik* worldview of its autochthonous people**

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**STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository\*\*, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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## DEDICATION

As I began to write the conclusion of my thesis, I received the news that Justino Valentim, a Fataluku elder and friend had just died. I was shocked and saddened; he was not an old man and was highly regarded as a leading authority on indigenous Fataluku culture. He had meticulously transcribed and documented much of this culture in personal archives, including 850 *vaihoho* (ancient Fataluku chants). He had generously shared some of this material with me in the years between 2011 and 2014 and assisted with the Fataluku transcriptions and translations for my book *Lian husi klamar: Sounds of the soul* (2012). He was delighted when I gave him a copy because at last there was a book in an indigenous language (Tetun) that detailed so much of the indigenous musical culture of East Timor. He and I had discussed the prospect of a Fataluku translation of my book as many Fataluku people do not speak Tetun. The work was to start in 2015 and I was looking forward to our collaboration; rest in peace dear man.

Not long after the news of Justino's death I learned of another death, that of Salvatore da Costa Pereira, a cultural custodian who had also shared memories and information about his culture with me. The passing of these elders made me realise that I have been very privileged in the friendships and associations that I have made over the many years of fieldwork along with the many unforgettable experiences accumulated along the way. I have been the recipient of extraordinary hospitality in East Timorese homes and village communities across the nation and my understanding of these people has been greatly enriched by these associations.

This research would not have been possible without the time and generosity of the East Timorese who performed their indigenous music, shared their stories and information so enthusiastically and willingly assisted in so many ways the research process. I thank them most humbly for the trust they placed in me and for sharing their musical culture, trusting me to capture it accurately.

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis defines the indigenous music of East Timor and the range and variety of its musical instruments and investigates their place within the societal and cultural mores of its autochthonous people. The island of Timor is a convergence of two major cultural groups, Austronesian and Melanesian, and as a consequence East Timor comprises many ethnolinguistic groups. My empirical research revealed diversity in the indigenous music across these groups, a reflection perhaps of the heterogeneous origins of the peoples who migrated to its shores. The indigenous cultures throughout East Timor, including musical are passed on by oral transmission and have been subjected to many influences and changes over the course of time. East Timor was on a trading network and influences from these other nations affected indigenous cultures. Centuries of invasion and occupation have also impacted the island culture. The widespread destruction by the departing Indonesian armed forces in 1999 affected the indigenous music to the extent that much of it is now regarded as endangered. Prior to this current investigation little had been written about East Timor's indigenous music, nor has its relationship to *lulik*, the society and the cultures of its autochthonous people been considered in any detail.

Empirical field research has shown that indigenous music is part of East Timorese society and culture rather than a separate entity. Therefore this thesis examines the society and culture of its autochthonous people as part of the investigation and looks at relationships between the indigenous music and these other aspects. East Timorese society is structured through a powerful system of extended marital alliance creating complex relationships between clans and its underlying indigenous belief system is based on ancestral worship. At its core is *lulik*, considered the spiritual root of all life. *Lulik* is a complex concept, with many layers, and the governance of *lulik's* sacred rules and regulations shapes most relationships in East Timorese society. As well as exploring the relationship between *lulik* and the indigenous music and societal and cultural mores of East Timor, this thesis proposes a scheme of classification which represents this relationship.

## NOMENCLATURE

“There are sixteen national languages recognised by the Democratic Republic of East Timor” (Dunlop, 2012, p. xvi). One of the national languages Tetun, is the *lingua franca* for most of East Timor, excluding those who are from the Fataluku and Baikeno ethnolinguistic groups. The names of musical instruments, songs, and dances may vary across language groups. “For example, the *kakeit* (Tetun), a jaw harp, is also known as *knobe* (Baikeno), *snarko* (Mambae), *rai rai* (Waima), *nagu* (Makasae), *pepuru* (Fataluku) and so on” (Dunlop, 2012, p. xvi). The orthography of Tetun is in a state of flux and so spellings of Tetun names varies in the Tetun dictionaries consulted during the course of the research and writing of the thesis. Whilst some readers may recognise some places and names by spellings codified during the period of colonisation by the Portuguese, the spellings of many words, has changed, for example, “Lautem is now spelt Lautein to conform to the new codification of the Tetun language being proposed by the Instituto Nacional de Lingüística (INL) in Dili, East Timor” (Dunlop, 2012, p. xvi).

The names of musical instruments played for indigenous music by the autochthonous East Timorese will be referred to in italics by their Tetun (or other language) names with an English explanation provided when they are initially introduced and for the rest of the thesis only by their Tetun names. The music played by the indigenous East Timorese which they regard as traditional will be referred to as indigenous music. Further discussion on the group regarded as indigenous East Timorese can be found in section 2.1 of this thesis. The musical instruments which the East Timorese regard as traditional will be referred to as musical instruments or traditional musical instruments. Further discussion on the reasoning for using the term traditional and musical instruments regarded as traditional by the East Timorese can be found on pages 92 and 93 of this thesis. Dance and song used in indigenous music regarded as traditional by the East Timorese will be referred to as indigenous song and indigenous dance. References to the indigenous culture and society of the autochthonous people of East Timor will be referred to as indigenous culture and indigenous society.

There are numerous indigenous languages in East Timor as cited above. This suggests that there may be diversity in the cultures of these language groups. The word ‘culture’ is used in the thesis in broad strokes and when discussing the culture of the East Timor, the author is referring to the commonality across these linguistic clan groups. When using terms such ‘culture’ (singular and plural), ‘indigenous culture’, ‘society and culture’, ‘indigenous culture of East Timor’ and ‘indigenous musical culture’, the author is referring to culture in general terms as it relates to all indigenous East Timorese that is, pan-East Timorese culture. The culture of specific ethnolinguistic groups is at times discussed and analysed to ascertain whether there are any patterns of difference, similarity or variation between cultures of specific clan groups and the pan-East Timorese indigenous culture.

A glossary is provided which may help to clarify an instrument name, dance, musical (or other) term. The nation of Timor-Leste is also known as East Timor, however the indigenous population generally refer to their country as Timor. This would be confusing in the context of this thesis as it could be misconstrued as including West Timor. Consequently I have adopted the English spelling of East Timor throughout this thesis.

Western labels have been given to pitches, pitch ranges, and intervals. This has been done as an analytical tool for western readers and is often an approximation.

There were a large number of personal communications involved in the research for this thesis, these are cited as; personal communications. There were 32 people interviewed. These interviews were recorded or documented through notes translated and transcribed, these interviews are cited as; interview, for clarity and conciseness.

During the course of the research for this thesis I wrote the book *Lian Husi Klamar: Sounds of the Soul* (2012). The book and the thesis use similar images as much of the material gathered during the field research for the thesis was also used for the book. The deep etched images of musical instruments used for the book were also intended for the thesis as they clearly illustrate these objects. Where the image was solely intended for the book and published there I have cited it. Where the image was acquired for the thesis and came to be used in the book, I have cited its original source only.

**KEYWORDS**

Traditional, indigenous, East Timor, East Timorese, music, instruments, culture emerging, oral tradition, classification, paronomy, taxonomy, organology, ethnomusicology, ethnolinguistic, autochthonous, ancestors, origin, migration, occupation, *lulik*, *uma lulik*, sacred house, dance, song, ritual, performance, *lia na'in*, cultural custodian, *liurai*, *tara bandu*, death, myth, society, culture, mores, function, musical, struck, blown, sound, *barlake*, *Mau-Lelo Bui-Lelo*

## BACKGROUND

- i. Background to my involvement with East Timor
- ii. Tekee Tokee Tomak: a field project

### i. Background to my involvement with East Timor

In 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor. Twenty-four years of suffering and resistance by the East Timorese followed until its independence in 1999. Activists from around the world supported East Timor's struggle during those years, amongst them were the brothers Martin and Robert Wesley-Smith. Robert, who lived in Darwin, was a passionate advocate for the East Timorese and assisted the resistance on many levels. His reputation as an activist put his name on the list of those banned from entering Indonesia (which included East Timor) during the years of occupation. Martin is an Australian composer who wrote many audiovisual compositions about East Timor's struggle for independence during the years of occupation. In 1999, Martin wrote a composition called *X* for clarinet and audiovisuals, which is about the popular resistance leader Xanana Gusmão and the struggle for independence. *X* was written shortly before Gusmão's release from Cipinang prison in Jakarta, Indonesia, where he had been imprisoned for seven years. The visuals in *X* are explicit in their portrayal of human rights abuses and the suffering endured by the East Timorese. Although I was well aware of the situation of East Timor it was not until I started performing *X* that I became involved in actively assisting the East Timorese, particularly East Timorese artists and musicians. I played *X* in a concert in Darwin in 2000. At the end of this performance there was no applause for five minutes after the piece ended just the sound of people quietly weeping. Several audience members were East Timorese living in Darwin. In September of 2001 just two weeks after the terrorist attacks on 9/11, I played a concert tour in the USA which included *X*. The same emotional response to the piece was to be repeated for the whole of that concert tour.

In April 2002, I was invited to visit East Timor with Martin and Robert Wesley-Smith to give a number of concerts in the capital Dili and remote villages beyond it. We three had no idea what to expect as we flew into Dili. I never imagined the effect that journey would now have on my life. The country was abuzz with the fervour leading up to the elections for the first president of the world's newest nation. "We were swept along in the excitement, and fell under the spell of the country, its people and its culture" (Dunlop, 2012, p. x). I played *X* and another audiovisual piece *Welcome to the Hotel Turismo* in these concerts. We went into villages with little or no electricity, often using generators supplied by local priests and village leaders for our sound amplification and projection needs. Martin and I were concerned that showing the content of these pieces to the East Timorese, many of whom were traumatised by their experiences during occupation, would rekindle memories that they were likely trying to forget. Community leaders who asked us to do these pieces assured us that the East Timorese needed to know that their experiences during occupation were not isolated. This understanding was confirmed in comments made after performances by some audience members. That was my first realisation that to a large degree, East Timorese society is based around the immediate village that a person comes from and that many members in fact do not travel far beyond its boundaries. As we toured East Timor "elders from a couple of villages remarked on the need to preserve their music for posterity. They were concerned that their indigenous musical culture would die with them" (Dunlop, 2012, p. x). I had no idea what this music sounded like at that time, nor did I see or hear any evidence of this music as we journeyed around the country.

We did hear music though. Groups of young people playing guitars and singing popular songs, Portuguese-style dance bands and singing from church congregations and choirs, but we heard and saw little else. At that time the evidence of the destruction of buildings, farming land, crops, animals, roads and of essential services such as electricity, was visible everywhere. Refugees as a result of the events of 1999 were still in camps across the border in Indonesia. East Timorese society was fractured and understandably, given all the problems, little attention was given to indigenous musical culture. We learnt from locals that, along with everything else, many musical instruments had been destroyed.

## ii. **Tekee Tokee Tomak: a field project**

“I left East Timor after that first trip feeling enriched by all I had seen and heard” (Dunlop, 2012, p. x) and wanted to know more about these people and their culture. At that time my Tetun<sup>1</sup> was almost non-existent apart from a few basic phrases. With much bravado and naivety I returned in 2003. This was the first of many trips to East Timor to record indigenous music. Some vital contacts were made from the outset, some almost accidentally, such as those which put me in touch with an artist community, Arte Moris,<sup>2</sup> and a tiny audiovisual archive, CAMSTL (Centro Audiovisual Max Stahl Timor Leste).<sup>3</sup> These two organisations and their members were eager to be involved in the process of researching and recording their native music.

The East Timorese from these two organisations knew little at that time about the musical instruments played for indigenous music, apart from the *baba-dook* (small drum) and *tala* (handheld gong). The dance *tebedai* (line dance accompanied by *baba-dook* and *tala*) and *dahur* (circle dance accompanied by song) was better known, but not regularly performed in the various villages from which came the East Timorese members of Arte Moris and CAMSTL. My working relationship with the members of Arte Moris and CAMSTL developed over the years into one of trust and friendship. I realised with hindsight how fortunate I was to be accepted into these two communities. I was shown and told things about East Timorese culture via my East Timorese research assistants that were seldom shared with foreigners.

These young people (they were all under 30) from Arte Moris and CAMSTL were from villages all over East Timor. When going to a particular village they would organise the succession of events which allowed a musical performance to take place for me to make a recording. Most of these members of Arte Moris and CAMSTL had not seen or heard the music from their own villages that were performed for these recordings. I was curious as to why this was the case, and over time learnt that for a variety of reasons the music played for us is seldom played nowadays.

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<sup>1</sup>Tetun, the *lingua franca* for many East Timorese, “is an Austronesian language of the Western Malayo-Polynesian branch. It originated in southeastern Celebes and is distantly related to Malay-Indonesian and most of the languages of Indonesia, the Philippines and the Pacific” (Hull, 2006, p. xi).

<sup>2</sup> Arte Moris is a community of visual artists, initially set up as a free art school by Swiss artist Luca Gansser and his wife Gabriela in 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Max Stahl is a cameraman who filmed the massacre of Santa Cruz on November 12, 1991. His film footage made public to the world the atrocities by the Indonesian military to the East Timorese. He subsequently filmed interviews with resistance leaders, and activities leading up to independence. His hundreds of hours of footage are now the main body of the film archive material in CAMSTL.

By 2009 the music recorded through the Tekee Tokee Tomak project was attracting interest from the international community, living both within and outside of East Timor. The project had recorded on film more than sixty hours of indigenous music. A DVD compiled from some of this film footage was made available to the general public. Audiovisual presentations about the indigenous music were conducted in some Australian schools and in conferences. After viewing the DVD, Hans Klemm, the United States of America's Ambassador in Dili, was keen to assist the documentation of the project's findings in a publication. In May 2010, a few months after I commenced my candidature in a doctorate of music I was awarded the funding for this publication by the Ambassador of the United States of America's Cultural Preservation Fund. The result was the book *Lian husi klamar: Sounds of the soul*, a bilingual publication in Tetun and English with accompanying DVD and CD, published in 2012. The book was aimed primarily at a readership of East Timorese, many of whom are semi-literate, and also foreigners interested in the musical culture of East Timor. Consequently the book is image rich and the language straightforward. *Sounds of the Soul* is included as an addendum to this thesis. Armed with the raw materials I had gathered from field work from 2003 to 2010, and the desire to deepen the research, I took these efforts to the level of the PhD in 2011.

## INTRODUCTION

- i. The purpose of this thesis
- ii. The importance of this study
- iii. Structure of the thesis

### **i. The purpose of this thesis**

At the time of thesis submission very little written research existed about the indigenous music of East Timor. That which does exist mostly refers to music contained within descriptions of other events in the society and culture, and relationships between music and *lulik* (Sacred, holy, forbidden, spiritual source of life, core of moral standards) have not been discussed in these publications. Until now the indigenous music of East Timor and/or its material objects have not been formally classified. The purpose of this thesis was twofold: first, to identify the material objects of the indigenous music of East Timor, its musical instruments and to investigate their place within the social and cultural mores<sup>4</sup> of the East Timorese. Second, to develop a system which best represented the material found in the research and through this classification ascertain what kind of relationship, if any, existed between *lulik* and the indigenous music and the societal and cultural mores of the islanders.

Central to my research was the investigation of the nature of the relationship, if any, between *lulik* and the indigenous music and the societal and cultural mores of East Timor, and whether it was possible to represent these relationships in a scheme of classification. In each of the components (*lulik*, music, society and culture) studied, there were tangible and intangible elements. These elements needed investigation to determine whether there were discernible relationships between them, and if so, to develop an appropriate scheme of classification which illustrated these relationships. Research consisted of my primary field research of audiovisual recordings, interviews, photographs and written material from my field note books, as well as the existing documentation by others about the historical background of East Timor and its social and cultural customs.

### **ii. The importance of this study**

I commenced field research in 2003, and discovered that the indigenous music of East Timor was a hidden culture and difficult to access. There were few intact musical instruments with which to play this music as most had been destroyed by the Indonesians during occupation (1975–1999). Many of the people who knew this music had died without imparting their knowledge to the next generation. These two factors placed this music in a fragile state; perhaps in danger of extinction.

During the course of research it became clear that the indigenous music was an integrated part of the cultures of the autochthonous East Timorese. The investigation needed to be framed in such a way that

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<sup>4</sup>The Latin; *mōrēs* is the plural form of *mōs*, meaning manner or custom. Mores are “a set of moral norms or customs derived from generally accepted practices. Mores derive from the established practices of a society rather than its written laws ... The term mores was coined by the sociologist William Graham Sumner (1840-1910)” (“Folkways and Mores”, 2015). “Mores consist of those ways of doing things which are current in a society to satisfy human needs and desires, but which include judgements as to societal welfare. As such, mores contain embedded philosophical and ethical principles of right and truth that guide attempts to live well and satisfy interests under the current conditions” (Manning, 2015, p. 14).

any relationships which might be revealed could be analysed. As no scheme of classification had been undertaken for the indigenous music of East Timor, careful consideration had to be given to the other elements which made up the whole life of the East Timorese, not just the music. *Lulik* is of central importance to the East Timorese, and it is not only appropriate to investigate the relationship of *lulik* to the music, but it is also of fundamental importance in the framing of a classification scheme.

### iii. Structure of the thesis

My thesis is divided into three parts. Part One consists of a historical study of the East Timorese and broadly discusses their social and cultural mores as well as reviewing existing literature, methodology and approach to the issues of classification. Part Two consists of my findings and discusses the musical instruments played for indigenous music and musically-related activities and the place of these in the mores of the society. Part Three elaborates the results of my research.

#### **PART ONE Historical, social and cultural overview**

In **Chapter One** the origins of the East Timorese are discussed, including migrations and occupation in order to understand the differences, variations and/or peculiarities in culture, particularly music as performed across the ethnolinguistic groups. The geomorphic features of the island of East Timor are examined to determine whether these have any bearing on similarities or differences between ethnolinguistic groups especially their social structure and cultures.

In **Chapter Two** the societal mores of the East Timorese are discussed. This is necessary in order to be able to evaluate the relationship of the indigenous music to the society. Three main ethnic groups living in East Timor are identified; however the only group which observes indigenous cultural practices is the indigenous East Timorese. From this point onwards, any mention of the East Timorese refers to the latter group – the indigenous East Timorese. The difficulties encountered by the indigenous East Timorese in maintaining their customary practices under Indonesian occupation, are set out. The importance and place of *lulik* as the essence of East Timorese society is highlighted and its place in the overall study considered carefully before looking at the place of music in the social and cultural mores of East Timorese society.

In **Chapter Three** the indigenous belief system of the East Timorese is examined, highlighting the elements of animism and investigating the most important rituals of the East Timorese. The importance of ancestors and ancestral worship, and the significance of *lulik*, *uma lulik* (sacred houses) and associated symbols to their belief system, is explained. The rituals of the East Timorese are classified into two main groups, rituals of life and rituals of death.

In **Chapter Four** further discourse on the rituals of life and death of the East Timorese is necessary before considering the place of indigenous music within these rituals. The significance of *barlake*<sup>5</sup> (traditional matrimonial contract) is discussed and also the importance of the *uma lulik* (sacred house) to rituals of life and death. An examination of the rituals of death is necessary in order to understand the importance of the relationship between the living and the dead.

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<sup>5</sup> *Barlake* involves “an exchange of goods between the families of the affianced couple” (Hicks, 2012, p. 124).

In **Chapter Five** the existing literature on the indigenous music is reviewed. Based on the information collated in the first four chapters, a set of research questions are proposed that will assist in the analysis of my empirical knowledge of the indigenous music and a consideration of its place in, and any relationships with, East Timorese society, culture and *lulik*.

In **Chapter Six** I explain my methodology and outline the different components of the study needing to be addressed. I explain the methods of my primary research as well as examining different classification systems, discussing their merits and limitations in the process of developing a suitable scheme.

## **PART TWO Findings of the research**

In **Chapter Seven** the musical instruments used for indigenous music by the East Timorese are identified and the reasoning explained for determining their status as traditional or not. Central to this reasoning is the significance of the ancestors. Issues of acculturation regarding the origins of the instruments, and their preliminary classification, are discussed. The instruments are initially grouped into two main groups: those which are beaten and those which are blown, with further groups added, including those shaken or pulled and their musical attributes discussed.

In **Chapter Eight** the place of song and dance in the indigenous music of East Timor is explained. The role of song is considered first because sometimes song is the only form of music used in certain rituals and often the only accompaniment to the *dahur* (circle dance). The two main forms of dance are *dahur* and *tebedai* (line dance) as well as variations of these. The role of dance generally in the society is discussed. Some song and dance is used for theatrical performances to tell a story and examples will be given. Further consideration of these forms is discussed in my interpretation of the findings in Part Three of the thesis.

**Chapter Nine** looks at the possibility of the musical instruments played for indigenous music having *lulik* status through analysis of the data collected from interviews. As a prelude to this, the role of music in human society is discussed within categories of communication, expression and social usage and then its role in East Timorese society. The question of gender, both of the musical instruments and in the playing of them is addressed and whether this has any bearing on the perceived *lulik* qualities of the instruments.

## **PART THREE Results of the research**

In **Chapter Ten** my interpretation of the relationship between *lulik*, the indigenous music, the instruments, song and dance and the society and culture is explained through analysis of the myth of *Mau-Lelo Bui-Lelo*. This is a myth in the period before *lulik*, when the world is taken from darkness to the world of light and the creation of *lulik*. The importance of the role of the ancestors to my hypothesis, in determining which musical instruments are traditional (including the human voice and dance), is discussed. A series of diagrams with *lulik* as the constant, serve to illustrate the relationship of *lulik* to the music and society and culture.

**Chapter Eleven** concludes the thesis. Explanations are given for the necessity of the research and the outcome of the findings and the classification developed. I discuss my research questions and the

conclusions reached. In the summation the scope for further research is recognised and possible directions elaborated.