

TONGUES OF MOUNT MERU

Interview with Jon Wesseltoft, July 2009

1. Could you please tell me how you started this project and what was the idea behind it? Why did you go with that name in particular?

We both have a deep passion for old school drone/ long form music and decided to hook up to try working together. We had a number of recording sessions in the summer 2008 and the material started to develop from there. Everything was improvised with almost no preparation. The name came after long considerations of what would suit the music. It refers to both multiple vibrations and a single source. Mount Meru referring to both Hindu, Buddhist and Jain mythology as a celestial center or point of unity and tongues as vibrations as individual qualities but also reflections of a singularity. It was perfect for cluster drone music.

2. How do you two work together for this project? Who brings what? And how do the tracks develop? Through improvisation? Please describe what sort of instruments you used for composing this record.

Basically we sit down, push record and just play. Later the tracks are edited to either suit a specific format, or for the sake of strengthening the sense of quality. There are no overdubs. The gear used for the "Ocean of Milk" LP recordings were oscillators, amps, shruti petti and an electric accordion keyboard.

3. The album you've released is quite intense, with very deep sounding drone tracks. Any particular inspiration behind them? They make me think of a rawer take on La Monte Young's aesthetics. What were you listening to, or thinking about, when you produced it?

Nothing specific really. The material grew out of the situation we were in when we recorded it; the type of gear used, and the long and sunny Scandinavian summer afternoons. We both like La Monte Young's work but did not think specifically about his work when doing the recordings. Naturally we both enjoy artists like Eliane Radigue, Charlemagne Palestine, C.C Hennix, Yoshi Wada and Tony Conrad, but neither of them had a specific influence. We wanted to do long form music that try to postulate a different sense of time and aesthetic development.

4. Is Tongues of Mount Meru specifically directed at long, sustained tracks? Or is it just the case with this particular release?

I guess it's gonna be more or less long form stuff. Music like this needs time to develop and also demands time from the listener. It's a full meal.

5. Please tell me a bit about how you came up with the sleeve and why did you pick up those elephants? It gives the record an Indian feel: was it intended? And is Indian music an inspiration for this project.

The sleeve is Lasse's idea and work. It came out great and suited the music perfectly. It definitely has some nice old school electronic music connections. The elephants hints at an Indian reference. I won't say Indian music is directly an influence to the record but absolutely in the bigger picture it is somewhat in the foundation of all 'drone' music. Remember much drone music, at least coming out of the New York La Monte Young school, had a close connection with the Dhrupad gharana that Pandit Pran Nath represented. I'm a great follower of Indian music and a collector of Indian music on vintage tape, both raga and bajans, and both Carnatic and

hindustani, so naturally for me, if not Lasse, raga principles seep through when recording. But not intentionally but deeper down in the marrow. To me raga music and its ideas about sound is one of the great treasures of music worldwide. It's only a great shame that it is reduced to being misunderstood and often markeded as 'world' or 'ethnic' music in the west. That's ignorance of a music which has a living ancient reference. The demand the music makes of the listener in raga music is very much the same as in long form/drone music in the west. It's equally important to refer to the dhrupad garana by the Dagar family, as to classic electronic drone music in the west to get the full picture historically for this kind of music.

6. Tongues, Milk, elephants... It all seems very organic: is it a way of saying that this music is not machine-like and made by humans?

Not really. It really just came out as a great name who also had some connotations to Indian music, mythology etc. We did not think specifically about the organic reference before, but when you mention it it seems like a fitting description. But there is definitely no sort of intended statement. It's simply a name. The Milk reference is not meant as milk as in something you drink, but as the sea surrounding the mountain Meru. More hindu references again. It has connections to time and movement.

7. Are there any other records/concerts/events planned for Tongues of Mount Meru?

There are planned more material to be released but at a later stage. But no concerts. If this project would play concerts it would be some rare site-specific thing. Somewhere out of a normal concert setting. Deep down in some cave temple.

