TOWARD CULTURAL PROCESS OF MUSIC-MAKING

The locals came to recognize the subcategory of sound-production, under the introduced category *musik*, according to use value in the peri-urban Madang societies. The new use value of *musik*, which is embedded in modernism, colonialism and local capitalist system in the Pacific, brought change and diversification of expression ranging form the reggae arrangement of *singsing lumbuna* to the lament *sore singsing*. Musical performance is exchanged for capital, cultural identity, solidarity, romantic union, folk belief, religious commitment, or political advancement. The exchange pattern of *baim singsing* once exchanged musical performance for tribal alliance, as its need waned as a result of colonization. The musical form of *singsing lumbuna*, however, provided its basic structure of musical performance involving the *kundu*, singing and dance for cultural show and public ceremony. The technological advancement of the radio, cassette reproduction and electronic instruments in various ways contributed to incorporate guitar band music in the postcolonial capitalist system. The discrepancy between the ideal type of *musikman* (musician) and the audience was invented as a result of the contextualization of *musik*. The discovery of use value of music as well as its development over half a century created ideal types of audience according to inclination. The older musical genre became obsolete and even completely forgotten in the grassroots ways of life; *baim singsing* terminated, the bambooband and stringband are subjects of nostalgia and tourism, and the instruments such as native bamboo flute and the *lipikes* became obsolete. At the same
time, however, construction of musicianship such as learning process and membership of
guitar bands reflects strong inclination to communal settings. In addition, the powerband
remains to be a favourite local entertainment, replacing the previous *gita resis*. The major
concern of this investigation started as a searching for a model of music-making in PNG in
the postcontact era. The model termed “generative structure” to exemplify creative
aspects of music-making or to grasp music in situation. To begin with, historical outline
and the disposition for reactions such as exuberance, crying, feeling *sore* or *nais*,
indifference, or even disgust and rejection were identified in order to delineate the basic
picture of guitar band music. The discourse that refers to music with Madang social
identity really reflects the homology of *Waniok* Ideology but merely bears superficial
relation to any demonstrative causes. The generative structure emerges through the
interaction between musical experience and discourse about music that typifies
“Madang’s music.”

In terms of formal characteristics guitar band music has a strong relationship
with the presence of tribal communities surrounding Madang town. The musicians
cultivate musical competence and experiment with technological ideas in the village
environment, while the urbanized centre has been catalyzing musical activity through
providing resources including the capital. Village-based network serves the basic principle
for the formation of guitar bands, at the same time becoming the source of imagination, as
their primary audiences, especially in early stage of performers’ career, are usually their
*wantoks*. These tribal communities are both real and imagined ones to a certain extent
inasmuch as they are simultaneously an ideal and place of activity for the grassroots. This
ambiguity of musical practice is a result of interaction *Wantok* Ideology, where the analogy of *wantok* merges the imagining of community and the everyday social structure in a single field of performance. The shared reality of community is the key to the music-making here in that it provides the pretext of activity. Nostalgia, yearning for village lives, and romance as the main topic of guitar band song presuppose the audience living in *wantok* environment. To distinguish such a world of experience in performance as real or imagined is not a significant point as long as it is a matter of consciousness. *Wantok* Ideology is the sole apparatus of inculcation in the social world to the grassroots in order to live communal way of life.

Even if there is a proper decoding of music, it should take much different basis such as existence of singular “cultural identity,” for the text of performance in practice consists of displacement of codification and communication. The all-night *six-to-six* dancing session of powerband music, which is the most dominant aspect of guitar band music in Madang, presents an illustrative ground for such displacement. In the *six-to-six* the audience experiences music as fragmented sound elements because of the general noise, inattentive listening, and multilingual song text. However, this did not mean that the audience lacks musicality. In fact, the audience shows more positive response to domestic pop, or *lokol*, numbers rejecting what they call *waitman singsing*. Powerband song texts are composed in such a way that the words with greater range of imagination stand out almost separately from syntactic coherency, which has had a crucial role in the compositional aspects of multilingual and syntactic fragmentation, repetition, and appropriation of obsolete lexicon. The performance of *six-to-six* appears rather chaotic in
the first look; nonetheless, it continues to attract the audience because of its attachment to the communal sense of imagination through fragment hearing. In fact, *lokol* compositions indicate a strong inclination to *tak ples* vocabulary that idolizes the landscape of village to interact with the feeling of attachment among the audiences.

Although the powerband culture continues to characterize music in Madang through formal and informal local music industry, the invention of *sore singsing* shows that the guitar band music is now exchanged with communal significance as well. The imagining of subject often has a focus on the sentiment *sore*, which usually develops into a deep reaction. The invention of the *sore singsing* indicates that guitar band music clearly has been taken away from a genre of entertainment to become an apparatus of expressing attachment and communal feelings. The production of *sore singsing* in a sense resembles that of *singsing tumbuna* in *mulung* initiation rites for the communion among the participants are important for the both. The invention of *sore singsing* shows that the cultivated familiarity and attachment to the sound of guitar over the decades have finally brought a drastic change of music-making, from entertainment to the lament. The process of invention here is an appropriation from the stringband song texts with Tok Pisin idiom *sore* that laments separation; even the word *sore* today is incorporated into Madang *tok ples* lexicon, and has become an important native expression.

The concept of *sore singsing* developed from the theme of *sore* in guitar band songs; this created a new form of expression in that lament was never performed in Madang funerals since the precontact ages. The invention of *sore singsing* has a great deal with a new form of representation of the sentiment *sore*. Having been incorporated in the
tok ples lexicon, sore articulates various senses of loss and attachment to the lost subject. Loneliness, sorrow and pity are Western equivalent of sore, yet the word sore is significant to lokol tunes specially because it denotes a relationship enveloped in a sense of love, which naturally became the central topic for love and nostalgia songs. The sentiment sore is not only expressed in the articulation of the word alone but also as a set of imagery that has a strong connection with everyday life in village. A sailing canoe and addressing to the dead consists of typical imagery of sore singsing in order to express the feeling. Here the nais and sore overlaps each other, since a funeral with sore singsing induces heavy crying and is often emphatically claimed as a more emotionally enriched (nais) funeral. The attachment with communal subjects undoubtedly makes the sore singsing felt as nais and sore simultaneously and inseparably. The core of affect is the prevalent musical expression involving addresses that creates the imagining of singing subject reflected in the voice. The generation of Madang stail vocal technique also represents positive feeling and attachment. As the compositions take local ideas, such as the singsing tumbuna, or tok ples imagery, Madang stail is developed as a favoured manner of singing by means of the homology of crying and precontact local singing. The sentiment expressed as nais or sore instantaneously finds a nexus in the lokol guitar songs through the association that relates women's ritual cry, the singsing tumbuna vocal technique, with the tone of voice of powerband Madang stail. To label this particular type of vibrato vocal style is not necessarily a political strategy that authenticates uniqueness of music in Madang, unless economic motivation is involved. Rather, the naming of Madang stail is essentially identification of singing subject in a communal
setting. For the singing subject inculcates the presence of communal feelings through its vocal technique as well as the topic of song, the grassroots locate the feeling related with the everyday life in village.

The term Wantok Ideology becomes as a consciousness behind the interaction mediated through Madang stail, multilingual lyrics; the sore singsing, with a particular inclination to relationships for socialization in village community in postcontact era, too, is in part a result of the imagining of wantok. The concept wantok entails the ideology of imagined community as well for it is really a Tok Pisin word that includes groupings ranging from relatives or fellowship to national identity; it therefore doubly refers to both the real kin and members of imagined community. The audience feels attachment to a piece of music through the imagining of wantok-ness through the addressing that expresses condition of loss and sorrow, the imagined wantok subject evoking the feelings sore and nais. The Wantok Ideology consists of the basic principle of musicality in that the grassroots are inculcated through the homology generated from their imagining of community. In the sore singsing the composition focused on mourning through the image of sailing canoes and addressing, and through experiencing the situation with music the mourners responded emotionally. The source of imagination in sore singsing is contained in the sound of music as a set of thematic elements that is to be expressed as emotional reactions in the time of death of a wantok by means of performance.

However, the repertoire of sore singsing is even arranged for the cassette to circulate along with ordinary tunes; this means that musical genre is by nature situational, and in a rigorous sense no formal definition is possible in the local music-making. This
transgressing nature of music-making shows that Wantok Ideology alone does not formalize musical genre; the association with the wantok is certainly a principle of associating musical imagery into experience, but musical context is not necessarily contingent to such association of tribal identity. Musical performance as a stimulus becomes highlighted and recontextualized by means of experience, which displaces the previous event. Sound-producing phenomena always consist of multiple processes of interaction and displacement, and in this very sense music is an event or a chain of events. The concept of fragment hearing involves the theory of “knowing how” in music-making for it belongs to a tacit dimension of cultural cognition. While Wantok Ideology is a shared idea with most locals, fragment hearing elucidates the structure of listening that people practice in most cases unreflectively. The way the audience listens to the words of music had been fragmented and displaced to a large extent due to the performative environment, multilingualism, fragmented syntactic segments, the de-referentializing of words, and the practice of baim singsing. The concept of fragment hearing delineates a model of aural perception in such a seemingly chaotic situation that attracts audience despite fluctuation of linguistic codes. While dancing might be the most important cultural code for the guitar band music, lexical representation remains as important as well for nostalgia and love songs, newly composed singsing tumbuna and the sore singsing. The audience is actually capable of reacting to the image evoked by performance through recreating the singing subject from certain sets of words that bear cultural significance. Fragment hearing is a principle of aural practice in which particular idioms reconstruct emotional value regardless of syntactic coherency.
The Wantok Ideology and fragment hearing together interact as the operating mode of differentiation and dispersion. The Wantok Ideology locates its principle in genre identification such as the distinctness of the lokol, Madang stall, or the invention of sore singsing through the associations with various cultural elements. Fragment hearing elucidates the underlying structure of aural perception that molds into composition and performance. The nexus between the two modes is the mediation of emotion, namely the attachment to the singing subject. Musical stimuli activated by fragment hearing infuse the feelings, and the emotion evoked by the addressing of subject finds its place in the wantok interaction. Differentiation is a cultural process of locating emotion that finds a direction to which the sentiment projects. The guitar band music in Madang actually had a clear distinction in that it has been was sung to the performer’s wantok, real or imagined. As it has been seen already, the preceding band forms to the powerband is facing complete banishment in the age of cassette reproduction, to the dismay of old-timers; likewise, the practice of sore singsing is still vulnerable to fundamentalism. Madang stall might develop into a national style to which many Papua New Guineans identify themselves. The waitman singsing might either provide compositional inspirations or completely replace the lokol music industry. However, as long as the communal ways of life remains as important in terms of both community of practice and the imagined community the generative structure that consists of a complex between the Wantok Ideology and fragment hearing should continue to be as the operating mode of music-making. Since the time when Aksim Siming warned postcolonial dissolution of community in his composition Yam ilonen manin lenmeg, guitar band songs have
expressed their attachment to the community. So long as the grassroots find sore, nais or salim tingting in guitar band compositions, it must continue to be the source of imagination whatever the content of “peri-urban,” “Madang,” or “grassroots” might become as.

Fragment hearing might be the basis of even all ideal types of musical listeners. In Madang’s case fragment hearing became emergent as a result of the performative practice singsing tumbuna and its successive phenomena such as the prevalence of multilingual song text. However, the concept fragment hearing characterizes musical perception in general regardless of social category, for the mutability of ideal types and the situation of hearing are primarily the source of inoculation that makes the sound of music affective. Musical information has “density” consisting of portions of stimuli, rather than the entire music, that decides the reaction of audience. The “proper” decoding of information probably never exists in the strict sense, because there is no end to musical information as resonance that bears complex pretext and changing context. Beyond the case of Madang, any music-making has its foundation in fragment hearing for demarcation of “complete” or “proper” code depends on performative situation, especially that the sound of music is dispersing by nature. In this sense, fragment hearing might be the primary nature to other types of musical cognition especially attentive “proper” act of deciphering. Musical meanings are dispersing because the judgement between “true” and “false,” or “proper” and “incomplete” information is contingent not only to cultural practice but a given situation or even within an individual from time to time. In addition, to imagine the existence of an encoded information, or a “proper” deciphering of musical information, is
an illusion, just like Wantok Ideology, to differentiate the sound and the social type based on identification of musico-vocal phenomena. Musical meanings communicate through density of information, which creates more stimuli to a listening ear than the ones that bear less significance. It is a form of exchange in which the sound itself is both subject and object of the communication—the existence of sound itself is both the means and goal of communication. Fragment hearing is raw and bare mode of aural cognition that is also the basic constituent of musical experience in general. This plain of communication is by no means even or smooth if one wishes to visualize; it is rather unlevelled, multiple, and irregularly textured. Syntax becomes significant in the sense that it provides the ground for the density of lexicon. The aural stimuli mold into an experience and an event through embedding and contextualizing themselves in the situation of performance, and when the audience experiences this lived world they become memorable, being reflected in the discourse of the neat and sore.