

The use of Yui language in Music – A Vehicle to Re-creation & Celebration of the Yui Speaker's Identity and the Yui Society's Socio-cultural Environment

R. Kamasungua

Abstract---The Yui language of the Salt Nomane District in the Simbu Province of Papua New Guinea is an endangered language with approximately 6500 speakers. The Yui speakers use language in music as a means of recreating and celebrating their identity, pride, social standing, relationships, stability, and survival fitness etc. For instance, in songs, they boast and reminisce about their achievements and origination of their tribe, the unique geographical features of their place, wealth, trading relations and etc. This enhances their identity, pride and social standing within the Society. The Yui people's achievements and experiences are communally shared within their particular tribe. Songs are always sung by a group of people within a tribe to communally celebrate and reaffirm communal achievements and experiences during specialized occasions. The use of language in music plays a major role in laying the foundation of the society's harmonious socio-cultural environment. This paper, aims to discuss how the speaker's identity and his socio-cultural environment is recreated and celebrated through the use of the Yui language in music. It also discuss how the awareness of the benefits of the use of language in music can be used as an important cause to language revitalization.

Keywords— celebration, identity, song, Yui.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Yui language is spoken by around 6500 people in the Salt Nomane region of the Simbu Province of Papua New Guinea. The Simbu Province is situated in the central highlands of PNG. PNG is a country that is diversified by around more than 800 different languages and Yui is one of them. Yui language and culture is dissipating as 80 – 90% of it's speakers have migrated into urban centres. (Towns and Cities). (Kamasungua, 2014) [2] These people who make up the majority of Yui speakers than shift from speaking Yui to speaking Tok Pisin, a dominant creole spoken in PNG as a 'unifying' language. Tok Pisin is an English based creole spoken by Papua New Guineans as a common lingua franca that every one can understand each other in, in a linguistically and culturally diverse country. According to Ager (1998-2016), Tok-Pisin is mostly made up of English words but has some Portuguese, German, Malay and Tolai words as well. [1] Tok Pisin is mostly spoken in urban squatter settlements as a language of convenience, internal trade and socialisation by people from all around the country. It is the second dominant language to English, the language of

instruction in schools. English is the official language of Papua New Guinea.

In order for Yui speakers in settlements to succeed in a linguistically diverse urban community, they shift from Yui to Tok Pisin. In time their children get to speak Tok Pisin permanently as their first language. A research that was done in 2013 showed that 60% of Yui adults in settlements speak Tok Pisin while only 20% speak Yui. According to the same research, an astounding 100% of Yui Youths in settlement admitted to speaking Tok-Pisin all the time. (Kamasungua, 2014) [2]-[3] These results sadly affirm that Yui language and culture is rapidly dying out.

Thus the use of Yui language in Music is also threatened to dissipate. This paper will discuss the use of Yui language in music which pose as an important vehicle to re-creation and celebration of the Yui Speaker's Identity and the Yui Society's Socio-cultural Environment.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

I collected five songs from Yui people in Piswara Settlement, Goroka Town, PNG. One of this song is a pig-killing feast song and the other four are courting songs. I interviewed the singers who are indigenous Yui speaking people. Most of the information I collected are from my own experience as a native Yui woman who grew up and experienced both the Western and the Yui culture.

III. USE OF YUI LANGUAGE IN MUSIC AS A MEANS OF RECREATING AND CELEBRATING IDENTITY, PRIDE, SOCIAL STANDING, RELATIONSHIPS, STABILITY, SURVIVAL FITNESS, COMPETENCE, AND SELF-ESTEEM

In songs, Yui speakers boast as well as reminisce about the following: a) The origination of their tribe. b) The unique geographical features of their place. c) Tribal wealth and d) successful trade relations.

A) *The origination of their tribe*

A clan / tribe's origination always depicts pride showing uniqueness and aesthetic features, attributes, characteristics, strenght, courage and success. These qualities often adorn and boost the clan's morale to survive competitively amongst neighboring tribes and allies who pose as trading partners, clans where betrothal and marriage partners can be arranged, refuge havens can be secured as well as clans where help in terms of goods, domesticated and valuable animals, artifacts and food both cooked and raw as well as other services could be exchanged / offered through reciprocity. Yui people express /

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R. Kamasungua is with the University of Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea.

boast about the uniqueness of their origination through the songs they sing in order to remember and remind others (neighbours and allies) of how successful and good they were in the past and because of that they can succeed the same in the present. Often these songs 'advertise' to neighbouring tribes of their potential in trade and warn others of their strength in war. This form of praise boost their self esteem and identity. For example, here is a *courting* song sung by a group of Yui people in Piswara settlement, Goroka town, boasting about the origination of their tribe.

Yui Version

Kamin bugu bugu dungu, Eri koire mena wiyo Bari koire mena wiyo (4X)

Su Ah Eribari koire nem wo, nem wo sa, nem wo, yogo wan kana wiyo sa.

Wai wai eia, wai wai eia, muna muna, abo abo (2X)

Yauna Aina skamna Eri yara ume, Kwiana, Moina skamna Bari yara yomwe, Eri ya Bari yara yomwe, (3X)

Na ya mole mole spaire spaire wii a, Na ya spaire spaire wii a, Nena mana skamna, Yobai yara yomwe, Nena mana skamna Diani yara yomwe, Yobai ya Diani yara yomwe (2X)

(Yui people in Piswara Settlement, Goroka town – 03/09/15)

English Translation

When day breaks, I came out of *Eri*, I came out of *Bari* (4X)

Su Ah *Eribari* father I am, father I am, father I am, I just came to see.

Wai wai eia, wai wai eia, muna muna, abo abo (2X)

Grandfather, grand mother come from *Eri*, Uncles come from *Bari*, *Eri* and *Bari*, (3X)

I stayed, stayed, slept, slept and came, I slept, slept and came, Father, mother come from *Yobai*, Father, mother come from *Diani*, *Yobai* and *Diani*

In this courting song the singers boast about the origination of their tribe. Eribari is the place where their ancestors originate from. Thus the singers boast about their place of origination. In the second line of the first stanza the singers affirm the place of their origination by saying '*Eribari father I am*'. This phrase gives the singers pride as well as affirming their identity of who they are. The word 'father' authenticates the singers identity as having a direct link to their place of origination. In the second stanza the singers continue to affirm their identity in lines 3 and 5. They mention that their 'grandparents' (*yauna, aina*) and 'uncles' (*kwiana, moina*) which are also synonymous to the word for ancestors (*kwiamoia*) in Yui. Hence in the above song they mention that their ancestors came from Eribari. However in the last line, they mention father (*nena*) and mother (*mana*) coming from Yobai and Diani. This depicts their current place / location. (i.e. the singers current place / home)

B) Unique geographical features of their place

Place is important to the Yui since it is static and has one's umbilical cord directly linked to it. When a baby is born, his umbilical cord is buried near his house to depict a direct link to

place. This means he is attached to the earth (geographical location) where he comes from and will also be buried when he dies. This is a strong tie binding a person to place and provides stability and identity for him. The place where a clan / tribe comes from in terms of village location, garden land, pig farming land, rivers within one's boundary, cliffs, mountains, waterfalls within one's boundary / land, and forest land with all its flora and fauna including the weather and other features are often expressed in songs. Thus Yui people boast about the uniqueness of the environment of their place and natural features of their landscape. For example here is a song sung by a group of Yui Speakers living in Piswara Settlement in Goroka town.

Yui Version

...na nina nil awa, mun nil awa, wara nil awa, (2X)

...wara nil awa...

...wara nil awa, sirua gi awa a, skaina gai yawa, (2X)

...na nina nil awa, meune nil awa, na nina nil awa, skua nil awa, (2X)

...skua nil awa, bani nil nome, paradais nil nome,

...bani nil nome, paradais nil nome, (3X)

...na nina nil awa, Ole nil awa, na nina nil awa, Gia nil awa (2X)

...Gia nil awa, Nogo nil nome, Damna nil nome (4X)

(Yui people in Piswara Settlement, Goroka town – 03/09/15)

English Translation

...my own river, *Mun* river, my own river, *Wara* river (2X)

...my own river...

...wara river, *Sirua* girl, *skaina* girl, (2X)

...my own river, *Meune* river, my own river, *skua* river, (2X)

...skua river, *Bani* drinks, *paradais* drinks,

...*Bani* drinks, *paradais* drinks, (3X)

...my own river, *Ole* river, my own river, *Gia* river (2X)

...*Gia* river, *Nogo* drinks, *Damna* drinks (4X)

In the above song the singers mention a river that runs through their land which is called *Haba Nir* (Moon River). The singers translate the Yui words into Tok-Pisin which is *Mun Wara*. The mention of this river affirms their attachment to place and boosts their identity. In the above song the singers also boast about significant birds in their surrounding environment such as the King of Saxony bird of paradise (*Sirua*) and the Regiana bird of paradise (*Bani*). These birds are significant in a sense that the King of Saxony bird of paradise feelers are highly valued and are skillfully woven into the pierced nose as part of the body decoration during singsing. The Regiana bird of paradise is also highly valued and is worn into the head during dance as part of body decoration for both men and women during singsing. *Nogodamna* is another familiar little bird often seen around the singers environment. In stanzas

2, 3 and 4 these birds are seen as drinking from two different rivers Meune and Olegia. These rivers runs through the singers land. Here in this song, the singers link the river to the birds to show the cultural attachment these significant birds have to the rivers and to the singers. The cultural link between the singer, his landscape (environment) and animals that live in it are clearly mentioned here. The mention of these birds and rivers show the special attachement of the singer to their environment and the animals that live there. The mentioning of this link / attachement between the singers to place and animals enhances their identity and stability. This boosts the speakers livelyhood to survive competitively within this environment they call their place / home.

C) Tribal Wealth

Tribal wealth for the Yui is measured in pigs, kina shells, black bird of paradise tail, red parrot feathers, and regiana bird of paradise. Young unmarried women are also considered part of tribal wealth due to the prospect of bringing in bride price for the clan / tribe. Thus in songs people mention the kind of wealth they as a tribe are known for accumulating and possessing in the past. Mentioning / boasting of past wealth in the song sets a prelude to their present wealth. They tell also in their songs of the wealth they currently possess. They also boast in songs what they are capable of possessing in the future. This telling / boasting of their wealth in songs boost their self-esteem and pride which enhances them to survive competitively within the society. It also informs other tribes of their ability to become successful trading partners, promising marriage and betrothal prosects in terms of exchanges of brides, and providing other benefits. This is an example of a *pig-killing* song sung by a group of Yui people depicting tribal wealth.

Yui Version

Ere bonikulsunga ire, Ware sunga ire
Ware Kale yadraleungo O, Yaumauwe (3 x)
Pu Ah

Ere bonikulsunga ire, Ware Sunga ire
Sirua Kabuyadrale dung O, Yaumauwe (3 x)
Su Ah

Yobai kulberandi, Dirima kulberandi Aiya

English Translation

Ere Boni flower grows
Red Parrot sings, showing off
Pu Aah

Ere Boni flower grows
Bird of paradise sings, showing off
Su Ah

Going around Yobai hill, Going around Dirima hill Aiya
(Kamasungua, 2014) [4]

Here the singers celebrate their wealth by mentioning *Kale* (Red Parrot) and *Sirua* (King of Saxony bird of Paradise.) The beautiful feathers of the red parrot is neatly woven into head band and is worn around the head during singsing time. The feelers of the King of Saxony Bird of Paradise is worn into the pierced nose. (see explanation under ‘b’) These birds are highly valuable and are used as part of a payment for bride price, compensation and trade for other valuables. The mention of these significant birds connotes and audibly celebrates and recreate the singers tribal wealth during the pig-killing feast singsing.

D) Trading Relations

A clan’s trading ability is determined by her wealth, generosity to give through the method of reciprocity, and her charisma to attract other clans as willing trading partners. Trade often come in the form of exchanges of goods, valueable items, and food such as sweet potatoe, yam, taro or banana harvest seasons, bride price ceremony between the bride’s clan and the groom’s clan, and betrothal food and meat exchange ceremony between the tribe’s of two young people who are betrothed to one another. Often during these ceremonies the members of each respective tribe would be given the men’s house to sit in and sing songs till day break. For example in a marriage ceremony the brides clan would occupy one side of the men’s house while the bride’s clan would occupy the other half and they would sing from the setting of the sun till day break. The bride’s clan would sing a song and when they finish, the groom’s clan will sing. They take turns singing from dusk until day break. In their songs, they boast about what they can offer to the other clan in terms of wealth and possessions. Each clan also challenge each other and boast of what they can do. Here is an example of a Trade song.

Yui Version

...bi ya yauri mamni, skanre skanre wii a, skanre skanre wii ya,
gire yaure mamni skanre skanre wii ya, gire yaure mamni skanre
skanne wii ya, Gore galmai mamni skanre, skanre wii a, skanre
skanre wii a

...sigia spania mamne mole mole wi ya, Abir ya Solba mamne
paire paire wii ya, wai wai eia, wai eia, muna muna, abo abo.

English Translation

Yauri (banana), I see, I see and I come, I see, I see and I come,
(2X)

Gore, Galmai (sugar cane), I see and I come, I see, I see and I
come

Sigi (Yam), I stay, I stay and come, *Abir, Solba* (Yam), I slept, I
slept and I came.

(Yui people in Piswara Settlement, Goroka town – 03/09/15)

Types of banana, yam and sugar cane are some of the trade foods in the Yui society. These foods are mentioned in the above song. *Yaure* is a type of banana which is seen as having higher value than other types and is reserved for important

occasions such as marriage feasts, betrothal food exchanges and other trade. *Gore* and *Galmai* are two different types of sugar cane which are also of high value and importance than other types of sugar cane and is usually reserved for important occasions as mentioned. The singers here takes pride by mentioning these specific food types by name in order to show the hearers of their potential to trade successfully. This enhances their chances of becoming promising trading partners with other tribes and also boost their moral to survive competitively and successfully within the society. The singers also by mentioning these trade foods recreate the clan / tribe's past identity. Only certain types of food crops are known to be originally from a specific clan and in the above song the singer's recreate their identity of being the sole owner of the mentioned important traditional crop/s.

III. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

To conclude, in trade songs, the singers boast about their wealth such as the types of valuable food they have, material goods, valueable items etc and most importantly they show the hearers (eligible trading partners) their ability to trade successfully. Yui people also reminisce, celebrate, and recreate the peculiar origination of their tribe. This becomes the basis for all their success. Place is metaphorically linked to one's umbilical cord thus in songs, a person's dwelling place, garden land, pig farming land, flora and fauna are often expressed. Finally, in songs, tribal wealth is mentioned. Wealth in the Yui is measured in pigs, kina shells, black bird of paradise tail and etc. These items are mentioned to show how wealthy a tribe is as well as its ability to become a successful trading partner. Therefore as we can see in the discussions of this paper, songs describing origination of a tribe, the unique geographical features of a place, tribal wealth and trading relations celebrate as well as recreate the Yui speakers' identity, pride, social standing, relationships, stability, survival fitness, competence, and self-esteem within their society. This enhances the Yui speaker to survive successfully and competitively within his society and environment.

However, the Yui language is dying out and this is a serious threat to the Yui culture which upholds the Yui society for centuries. Therefore, the following needs to be done; first of all an awareness need to be made to all Yui settlers throughout towns and cities of PNG to continue to practice and keep the traditional songs such as the pig-killing feast songs, trade songs, courting songs, and marriage feast songs alive. Secondly, Yui speakers who are living in the villages need to be encouraged to continue to keep the custom of trading goods, valuable items, pigs, garden foods through marriage feasts, trading sessions, betrothal food exchanges and others. This will cause them to continue to practice and keep the different types of songs mentioned in this paper. Thirdly, the Yui people both within settlements in urban centres and in the villages need to be made aware of the benefits of the traditional pig-killing feast songs, trading songs, courting songs, and marriage feast songs which will cause them to continue to cherish and practice these songs during important cultural occasions. This will in turn be an important cause for Yui language revitalization. Fourthly, because of the reality that the Yui language is dying out, these

songs and the Yui culture needs to be researched, recorded and written down for the future generation who might never know their culture. And this is what I as an indigenous Yui woman am doing now. I have planned to continue to research and document my culture.

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R. Kamasungua comes from the Simbu Province of Papua New Guinea. In 2004 she graduated from the University of PNG with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Communication. In 2005, she also graduated at the University of PNG with a Bachelor of Arts Honors degree in Literature.

She worked as a TUTOR with the Language & Literature Department of the University of PNG for 2 years (2004 – 2005). Currently she teaches Language courses at the University of Goroka, PNG as a SENIOR TUTOR (2013 – Current). She has published a collection of Poetry titled *'The Learner'*, UPNG Press, 2014. She also published a short story titled *'Night-mare'* in "The 2012 Crocodile Prize Anthology," Pukpuk publications, Waigani (pp77). In September 17-20, 2014, she presented a research article titled, *"The Yui Language, a Vehicle to Societal Cohesiveness and Survival Competence within the Yui Speaking Community,"* in Okinawa, Japan. This article is published in the journal titled "Indigenous Languages: Value to the Community" (pp 138-143). Also in January 20-24, 2014 she presented a paper titled *"The Endangerment of the Yui language"* at the Workshop of Languages Papua 3 by Universitas Negeri Papua, Indonesia and was awarded a certificate of presentation. In August 20-21, 2015, she also presented a paper titled *"Respect as a Cultural Convention regulating Non-verbal Communication in the Yui Society"* at the 2nd ICLLCS at Burapha University, Thailand and was awarded a certificate for oral presentation.

Ms Kamasungua is a member of the FEL (Foundation for Endangered Languages) since 2014.